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DOSTOEVSKY
AND HIS CREATION
A PSYCHO-CRITICAL STUDY
by JANKO LAVRIN



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To
A. R. ORAGE

NOTE

THE substance of the present work has already appeared in a slightly different form in the *New Age*, and I wish to express my thanks to the Editor for permission to reprint it. The quotations used in this book have been taken from various English translations. Passages quoted from *The Possessed*, *The Insulted and Injured*, *Raw Youth*, and *Brothers Karamazov* are from the versions by Mrs Constance Garnett, published by W. Heinemann. For the references to the *Letters from the Underworld*, *The Idiot*, and *Crime and Punishment*, I am indebted chiefly to the translations published in the Everyman's Library. For the quotations from Dostoevsky's 'Journal' I have largely used the *Pages from the Journal of an Author*, translated by S. Koteliansky and J. Middleton Murry (Maunsel & Co.), and extracts from letters are, with few exceptions, taken from the *Letters of F. M. Dostoevsky*, translated by Colburn Mayne (Chatto & Windus). In a few instances the translations are my own.

J. L.

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	SOME NOTES ON DOSTOEVSKY'S LIFE	I
II.	DOSTOEVSKY AND MODERN ART	29
III.	DOSTOEVSKY AS PSYCHOLOGIST	42
IV.	THE STRUGGLE FOR AN ABSOLUTE VALUE	57
V.	'COSMIC MUTINY' (A CONTRIBUTION TO THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SATANISM)	69
VI.	THE WRESTLE WITH THE VOID	85
VII.	THE BANKRUPTCY OF 'SUPERMAN'	98
VIII.	THE 'TWO TRUTHS'	114
IX.	CHRIST AND HIS DOUBLE	131
X.	THE RELIGIOUS SELF-ASSERTION	143
XI.	TOWARDS THE NEW SYNTHESIS	151
XII.	CULTURE AND RELIGION	166
XIII.	THE 'RUSSIAN IDEA'	177
XIV.	CONCLUSION	189

I

SOME NOTES ON DOSTOEVSKY'S LIFE

THE general poverty and emptiness of our modern Art arises from the fact that contemporary artistic creation is not the outcome of an overflowing fullness of life with its inner necessity to create, but rather of a deliberate strain of the will with which we endeavour to mask our growing spiritual impotence. A modern artist creates, as a rule, not because he *must* create, but because he *wills*. Instead of the royal scattering of a rich and dynamic personality, we see in his creative effort rather a petty dissecting and painful re-assembling of his broken, dismembered Ego. That is why the result always bears such a casual and experimental character. Lacking all the symptoms of inner inevitability, our deliberate, emaciated, tired, and tiring art is at its best vegetating in a conservatory—vegetating not as an attempt towards the highest affirmation of life, but as a shelter from, or even as a negation of, life.

Dostoevsky and his Creation

In such a sterile epoch a writer like Fyodor Dostoevsky is bound to appear not only as an outstanding exception, but also as a puzzling and even disquieting enigma. For with all his virtues and defects he belongs to those rare and sporadic redeemers of the human spirit who are overpowered, so to speak, with the surplus of their inner life to such an extent that often they give the impression of being possessed by some irrational forces which they must release and objectify in artistic creation in order not to be crushed by the accumulated pressure.

Almost the whole creation of Dostoevsky is of this kind. Hence we can elucidate the essence and significance of his writings not so much by current æsthetic standards, as by diving, first of all, into those psychological depths where we find the common root of his inner drama and of his art. For the latter was but a natural and necessary result of the former.

Such an investigation, moreover, may reveal and explain some of the most important characteristics of contemporary spiritual drama in general. But before touching upon this side of the matter, it is not superfluous to mention at least those moments of Dostoevsky's external life which may partly illustrate the shaping of his mentality and help us to unriddle the inner

Some Notes on Dostoevsky's Life

biography of the greatest 'pathologic' genius in European literature.

I

It seems that Dostoevsky was predestined, not only by his whole unfortunate life, but even by the circumstances of his birth, to become a poet of the pathologic 'underworld'—the spiritual, as well as the social. For he entered the world in a 'clinical' atmosphere, namely, in an hospital for the poor in Moscow, where his father was employed as physician. As the large Dostoevsky family lived in the building of the hospital itself, it is not improbable that the first conscious impressions of the little Fyodor were those of misery, humiliation, and disease. At home, on the other hand, he grew up in a religious atmosphere, at once old-fashioned and typically Russian, the Bible and Karamazin's *History of Russia* being among the chief sources of his spiritual relaxation and instruction. As a boy he usually spent his summer holiday in a little cottage near Tula, among the simple-minded peasants, and this fact is important in so far as his passionate love for the Russian common people probably took its root in

Dostoevsky and his Creation

some of those early impressions, which he never could efface from his memory.

After a comparatively good education in Moscow, he left in 1837 for Petrograd in order to enter the College of Engineering. Among his richer and less developed comrades there he felt so isolated that his only pleasure and company were books. In these he immersed himself more and more, reading all the best authors he came across—from the French and German classics to Pushkin, Gogol, and the critic Bielinsky. Among his favourite writers were, above all, the great realist Balzac, the German romanticist Hoffmann, the ardent idealist George Sand, Eugene Sue, Victor Hugo, and Dickens. Some of these names were already, at that time, helping to form the character and the general direction of Dostoevsky's literary genius, especially Balzac (whose *Eugenie Grandet* he translated into Russian), Hoffmann, and Gogol. There was, however, still another very important influence, namely Petrograd itself.

And, in fact, after the warm-hearted, typically Russian Moscow, with its mystical and patriarchal atmosphere, Petrograd often seems to be the most official, cold and prosaic town of Russia—a kind of Russian Berlin. But so it seems at

Some Notes on Dostoevsky's Life

the first glance only. For as soon as we penetrate into the 'spirit of the place' we may get a simultaneous and totally different impression—the impression of the most fantastic and irrational city on earth. Moreover, it is just this paradoxical combination of official prosaic dullness with a hidden, lurking mysteriousness that makes the Russian capital so interesting, so unique, and so 'pathologic.' Especially in winter, and even more during the magical white nights, it has the appearance of a fantastic nightmare town, or of a *fata morgana*, which has been suddenly conjured up out of the endless marshes only to disappear at the first cock-crow. Contrary to the bright, determined lines and colours of the southern towns, here everything seems but a dusky half-tone, but a misty hint. Behind the chaotic, shapeless masses which surge towards a low and sleepy sky hovering over the earth, one begins to suspect another mysterious reality, until each building, each corner, each sickly face becomes a token of something more profound, transcendental and spectral.

There is no doubt that Dostoevsky's mentality was deeply impressed and attracted by this aspect of Petrograd: most of his later subjects and characters, and, above all, his whole attitude

Dostoevsky and his Creation

towards reality, bear a strong mark of that *spiritus loci*. Besides, he himself described the genesis of this attitude in a sketch (printed in his periodical *Vremia* of 1861), referring to those early days—a sketch which, although it is a very little known one, may give the key to Dostoevsky's peculiar realism.

‘I remember,’ he writes there, ‘once in the wintry month of January I was hurrying home. At that time I was still very young. As I drew near to the Neva, I stopped for a moment and cast a penetrating glance along the river into the hazy frost-dim distance which suddenly glowed with the last purple flash of the evening as it faded away on the misty horizon. The night was settling down over the town, and over all the endless snowy plain of the Neva infinite myriads of sparks from the misty rime were spread by the last gleam of the sun. It was very cold. . . . A chilly vapour was rolling from the tired horses, from the hurrying people. The dense air trembled at the slightest sound and like giants there rose and poured across the cold sky from all the roofs pillars of smoke, mingling and scattering on their way—so that it seemed new buildings were mounting over the old ones, a new city was being pieced together in the air. . . . At last it seemed as

Some Notes on Dostoevsky's Life

if all this realm with all its inhabitants—whether potent or feeble—with all its dwelling places, its dens of beggary and gilded palaces, were nothing but a fantastic magical vision, a dream, which in its turn would immediately disappear and dissolve in vapour towards the dark blue sky. A strange idea suddenly stirred within me. I shivered, and my heart was thrilled in that moment by a simmering rush of blood which was surging up in me like a tide of mighty, hitherto unknown, feeling. It seemed to me as if my mind had conceived something in that minute—something which until then was hidden in me as a vague foreboding; it seemed to me as if my gaze had penetrated into a new world which was before unknown to me and conjectured only by some dim hints and mysterious tokens. I consider that from that minute my real existence began. . . . And, in fact, from that time, *i.e.*, from that very vision (for I call my experience on Neva a vision) exceedingly strange things began to happen to me. . . .’

This city, so realistic and so fantastic in its prosaic realism, influenced the direction of Dostoevsky's creative genius to such an extent that, not only in his attitude towards the external world, but in the general atmosphere of his

Dostoevsky and his Creation

writings, one breathes the very 'soul' of Petrograd. The realism of all his chief novels is more or less permeated, as it were, by another, spectral reality which has nothing to do with 'romanticism,' but is something different and much more profound.

II

On leaving College, Dostoevsky became an official, but a year later he suddenly resigned, and although he had written nothing until that time, he decided to live for literature and by literature. In this way he began an utterly unbalanced existence, full of misery, calamities, 'nerves,' and maladies. Under the influence of Gogol he wrote his first story, *Poor Folk*—a simple and subtle everyday love-tragedy between an orphan girl and a shy, down-beaten and half-starved clerk, Makar Dievushkin. Dostoevsky sent the story to the celebrated poet Nekrassov, who showed it to the critic Bielinsky. Both of them were stirred to the greatest admiration. Bielinsky himself took the young debutant under his protection, and even before *Poor Folk* was published (1846), Dostoevsky became popular in literary circles. He was, however, so much

Some Notes on Dostoevsky's Life

intoxicated by this sudden fame that he lost his head. Some of his letters of that date show an almost childish boastfulness and conceit.

‘Well, brother,’ he writes, in one of his letters, ‘I believe that my fame is just now in its fullest flower. Everywhere I meet with the most amazing consideration and enormous interest. I have made the acquaintance of a lot of very important people. Prince Odoyevsky begs me for the honour of a visit, and Count Sollogub is tearing his hair in desperation. Panayev told him that a new genius had arisen who would sweep all the rest away. . . . Everybody looks upon me as a wonder of the world. If I but open my mouth, the air resounds with what Dostoevsky means to do. Bielinsky loves me unboundedly. The writer Turgenev, who has just returned from Paris, has from the first been more than friendly, and Bielinsky declared that Turgenev has quite lost his heart to me. . . .’ And after that there follows a significant post-script—‘All the Minnas, Claras, Mariannas, etc., have got amazingly pretty, but cost a lot of money. Turgenev and Bielinsky lately gave me a talking-to about my disorderly way of life. . . .’

In the meantime, Dostoevsky's second long story, *The Double* (also influenced by Gogol),

Dostoevsky and his Creation

was a literary failure, and a disappointment for Bielinsky who proclaimed this in many ways remarkable work simply 'pathologic nonsense.' None the less, the young author went on writing with complete self-confidence, showing in the very beginning of his literary career all the chief features of his later works and tendencies. Already in his first literary attempts he is attracted by the 'insulted and injured,' and, on the whole, succeeds in combining an astounding analytical power with his plastic presentation of the characters. In spite of all the complications of his plots, he is not so much interested in external events as in the inner working of his heroes, thus transferring the centre of gravity from plot to psychology. As psychologist, on the other hand, he instinctively selects and emphasises not the normal but those abnormal moments in which the human soul reaches its highest and most painful tension. He indulges especially in tragic scenes with a strange satisfaction, almost with delight, manifesting even then all the germs of his 'cruel genius.'

Beside *Poor Folk* and *The Double*, he had written, in the first two years of his literary activities, about a dozen shorter stories of varied character, when suddenly his life was cut in two

Some Notes on Dostoevsky's Life

by an entirely unexpected catastrophe. On the 23rd of April, 1848, he was arrested as a member of the revolutionary Petrashevsky-circle and thrown into the dungeons of the ill-famed Petro-Pavlosk fortress where, for several months, he awaited the sentence of the Court Martial. On the 22nd of December of the same year, he was conveyed with the other revolutionaries—without any preliminary explanations—to the Semyonovsky Square. On the Square there had been erected a scaffold in front of which now followed a most disgusting and cruel scene; but let us use Dostoevsky's own words as to what happened :—

‘To-day, the 22nd of December,’ he wrote to his brother, ‘we were all taken to Semyonovsky Square. There the death sentence was read to us, we were given the Cross to kiss, the dagger was broken over our heads, and our funeral toilet (white shirts) was made. Then three of us were put standing before the palisades for the execution of the death sentence. I was sixth in the row; we were called up by groups of three, and so I was in the second group, and had not more than a minute to live. . . . I had time to embrace Plestcheiev and Durov, who stood near me, and to take my leave of them. Finally, retreat was sounded, those who were

Dostoevsky and his Creation

bound to the palisades were brought back, and it was read to us that His Imperial Majesty¹ granted us our lives. . . .’

This dreadful scene was, in other words, but a deliberate performance with the object of giving a ‘lesson’ to the young rebels. One of the condemned went mad on the spot, and never recovered. As to Dostoevsky, he passed, while awaiting his death, through such moments as are known to very few mortals.¹ In order to make the whole procedure still more dramatic, all the reprieved rebels were sent in chains almost straight from the Semyonovsky Square to Siberia for penal servitude.

III

In the Siberian jail Dostoevsky spent four years—in company with murderers, thieves, and other criminals from all parts of Russia. ‘I had made acquaintance with convicts in Tobolsk,’ he wrote later (1854) to his brother, ‘at Omsk I settled myself down to live four years with them. They are rough, angry, embittered men.

¹Dostoevsky on several occasions refers to this episode, especially in his *Idiot*.

Some Notes on Dostoevsky's Life

Their hatred for the nobility is boundless ; they regard all of us who belong to it with hostility and enmity. They would have devoured us if only they could. Judge then for yourself in what danger we stood, having to cohabit with these people for some years, eat with them, sleep by them, and with no possibility of complaining of the affronts which were constantly put upon us. . . . A hundred and fifty foes never wearied of persecuting—it was their joy, their diversion, their pastime ; our sole shield was our indifference and our moral superiority, which they were forced to recognise and respect.’

Thus, soon after the intoxication of his first success and literary fame, he was compelled to learn the greatest humility and resignation. His only solace in that hell was a copy of the New Testament, given to him by one of those heroic wives who voluntarily followed the well-known Decembrists to Siberia. After four years of hard labour he was taken as a private in a Siberian line-battalion, without being permitted to return to European Russia. In 1856 he married the widow of a certain Issayev, and only three years later was allowed, with his wife and stepson, to go back to Russia.

It is hardly necessary to emphasise the significance of the penal servitude for his spiritual

Dostoevsky and his Creation

development, as well as for the new orientation of his talent. He himself writes to his brother: 'I won't even try to tell you what transformations were undergone by my soul, my faith, my mind, and my heart in those few years. Still the eternal concentration, the escape into myself from bitter reality, did bear its fruit. I now have many new needs and hopes of which I never thought in other days. But all this will be pure enigma to you. . . .'

It seems as if he had been bound to pass through the greatest Inferno of life in order to become the greatest seer of the suffering soul. The immediate, and in many ways very cautious, result of this Inferno was the *House of the Dead* (1861)—the first book he published after an involuntary eleven-year pause in his literary activities. It is perhaps the most powerful autobiographical book in modern European literature—apart from the fact that it gives also a profound insight into criminal psychology. In sincere and simple language Dostoevsky describes his convict life, and, in spite of all the horrors he endured, he utters not a single word of reproach or revenge. It is just the reverse: not only does he reveal a great sympathy with his fellow-convicts, but has good words even for his jailers. In many criminal outcasts

Some Notes on Dostoevsky's Life

he even discovered 'deep, strong, beautiful natures,' which often have gone astray owing to external circumstances. 'How much joyless youth,' he concludes, 'how much strength for which use there was none, was buried, lost in those walls!—youth and strength of which the world might surely have made *some* use. For I must speak my thoughts as to this: the hapless fellows there were perhaps the strongest and, in one way or another, the most gifted of our people. There was all that strength of body and mind lost. Whose fault is that?'

It was this new attitude towards the criminals that many years later struck Friedrich Nietzsche to such an extent that he wrote in his *Twilight of the Idols*: 'The criminal type is the type of the strong man made sick. . . . Concerning the problem before us, Dostoevsky's testimony is of importance. Dostoevsky, who, incidentally, was the only psychologist from whom I had anything to learn: he belongs to the happiest windfalls of my life, happier even than the discovery of Stendhal. This profound man, who was right ten times over in esteeming the superficial Germans low, found the Siberian convicts among whom he lived for many years—those thoroughly hopeless criminals for whom no road back to society stood open—very

Dostoevsky and his Creation

different from what even he had expected—that is to say, carved from about the best, hardest and most valuable material that grows on Russian soil. . . .’

Of considerable significance for the trend of Dostoevsky’s further writings was also the fact that in Siberia developed the ‘sacred disease,’ or epilepsy, from which he suffered until his death. In his works he often dwells on the peculiar features of this strange malady (Nellie in the *Insulted and Injured*, Myshkin in the *Idiot*, Kirillov in the *Possessed*, and Smerdyakov in *Brothers Karamazov* are typical epileptics). However, it was not its clinical, but rather its mysterious, mystical side that interested Dostoevsky. One of the characteristics of his epilepsy was the fact that before the fits his consciousness had flashes of a profoundest ecstasy and intuitive insight into a higher truth. His hero Kirillov describes such flashes as follows :—
‘There are seconds—they come five or six at a time—when you suddenly feel the presence of the eternal harmony perfectly attained. It’s something not earthly—I don’t mean in the sense that it is heavenly—but in that sense that man cannot endure it in his earthly aspect. He must be physically changed or die. This feeling is clear and unmistakable ; it’s as though you

Some Notes on Dostoevsky's Life

apprehend all nature and suddenly you say, "Yes, that's right." God, when He created the world, said at the end of each day of creation, "Yes, it's right, it's good." It . . . it's not being deeply moved, but simply joy. You don't forgive anything, because there's no need of forgiveness. It's not that you love—oh, there's in it something higher than love—what's most awful is that it's terribly clear and such joy. If it lasted more than five seconds the soul could not endure it and must perish. In those five seconds I live through a lifetime, and I'd give my whole life for them, because they are worth it. To endure ten seconds one must be physically changed. . . .'

Such a state of consciousness, however, may confront us with quite unexpected dilemmas. For it is obvious that a man with a highly developed and inquisitive intellect cannot avoid the question whether these flashes of a 'higher harmony' have an objective value or whether they are but subjective self-delusions. In other terms, the truth of his consciousness is seeking for an intellectual sanction, and, since this is not obtained, there may arise that growing and dangerous tension between the 'two truths' which is so characteristic of Dostoevsky, as well as of many of his characters.

Dostoevsky and his Creation

IV

After his return to Petrograd, Dostoevsky began (in 1861), together with his brother Michael, to publish the periodical *Vremia* (Time) in which he printed his *House of the Dead*, as well as his first big novel, *The Insulted and Injured*. The latter is on the whole a relatively weak work, and in spite of many profound analytic passages and fine psychological characteristics, it sometimes approaches very closely the line between drama and melodrama, a defect which partly explains the great success of the book among the reading masses.

Two years later the *Vremia* was prohibited by the authorities, and this proved a hard financial blow for Dostoevsky, who was always distinguished by an extreme carelessness in pecuniary matters. In order to improve his material position, he started in 1864 another periodical under the title *Epokha*, but this new undertaking was far from a financial success, although Dostoevsky published in it his interesting *Letters from the Underworld*—a work with which begins Dostoevsky's 'psychological' transvaluation of existing values, as well as that tragic mental split which now becomes the chief

Some Notes on Dostoevsky's Life

undercurrent of his further creation. With ruthless dialectic power and psychological intuition, he anticipated already in this work many problems and dilemmas which were later put forward by Nietzsche, and which at the present time are no less actual than in the days when the *Letters* were written.

The mood of Dostoevsky was then troubled not only by inner, but by external circumstances as well, for in the same year he lost both his brother and his wife. As he was now obliged to support the deceased brother's family, his debts and material difficulties increased more and more. In addition, his new periodical *Epokha* was bankrupt, and in order to avoid unpleasant consequences he went abroad. In Wiesbaden he suddenly took to gambling and won 11,000 francs, but, carried away by his passion, (described so splendidly in his *Gambler*), he lost all his money. Some months later he returned to Petrograd where soon after (1866) his novel, *Crime and Punishment*, appeared.

This new literary achievement, with its unsurpassed psychology of crime, at once established Dostoevsky's fame throughout the whole of Russia, although most of the critics and readers failed to divine the real essence of two such complex characters as Rodion Raskolnikov and

Dostoevsky and his Creation

Svidrigailov. But the rising fame of the author did not diminish his debts; things became so bad that he was even in danger of being thrown into the debtors' prison. So, in 1866 he married again and went anew, or rather fled, with his second wife, Anna Grigoryevna, to Western Europe.

As chance would have it, in his flight he stopped first in Germany (at Baden) where he gambled again. In this operation he lost all his travelling money, so that he was compelled to pawn even his wife's luggage. . . . But that was only the ominous beginning of his unfortunate four-year-long vagabondage abroad.

During these four years of utmost misery and privation he visited France, Switzerland, Italy, and Germany, but everywhere he recorded nothing but penury. The chief items of all his letters from abroad are urgent, often utterly humiliating appeals to his friends and publishers for money. It is enough to quote one desperate epistle of that period in order to give an idea of the rest. 'How can I work when I am hungry and had to pawn my very pantaloons to get the two thalers for the telegram?' he writes from Dresden (on the 28th of October, 1869) to the poet A. Maikov. 'The devil take me and hunger! But she, my wife, who

Some Notes on Dostoevsky's Life

now is suckling her infant, *she* had to go herself to the pawn-shop and pledge her last warm woollen garments, and it has been snowing here for the last two days. . . .’

Add to all that his extreme nervousness, his continual misunderstandings with his publishers, his feverish speed in writing his novels, his aversion to the self-complacent bourgeois-spirit of Europe, his longing for Russia, the loss of his beloved child in Geneva, his growing inner doubts and torments, as well as the terrible attacks of his epilepsy, and you will get an idea of the conditions under which Dostoevsky wrote such works as *The Idiot* and *The Possessed*, which belong to the profoundest achievements of modern literature. Moreover, owing to his ‘vitality of a cat,’ he even managed to take a lively interest and active participation in the cultural movement of his country.

v

It ought to be borne in mind that just those years of Dostoevsky's rambling in Western Europe were, in spite of a fresh reaction, years full of promise for Russia, which

Dostoevsky and his Creation

re-awakened to a new life after the liberation of the serfs (1861) by Tsar Alexander II. It was the period of a powerful constructive impetus towards new political and social forms, and in this fermentation participated not only politicians, but also most of the Russian men of letters who were divided into a National (Slavo-phile) and a 'Western' group. The so-called Slavophiles were decidedly distrustful of modern European civilisation, while the 'Westernisers' tried to reorganise and regenerate Russian life entirely on a European basis. Of course, a more intimate acquaintance with the real spirit of modern European civilisation frightened many an enthusiastic Westerniser—one of them, for instance, was the famous revolutionary publicist, Alexander Hertzen, who, during his long stay abroad, became so impressed by the growing European Philistinism and materialism that he ultimately changed his entire attitude towards the West.

As to Dostoevsky, he had already been somewhat surprised and repelled by the mentality of modern Europe during his previous two journeys abroad. But all his fears and views on this subject assumed much greater proportions during his long exile in the West, where he was terrified by the vision of the approaching empire

Some Notes on Dostoevsky's Life

of the self-satisfied universal Bourgeois, without soul or spirit. The more he became conscious of that the more he wanted to find in Russia an inner antithesis to the European West. For certain profounder reasons, which will be explained later, this tendency became, so to speak, the core of his cultural and political *Credo*. All the vital ideas of modern humanity he tested in the fire of his soul, and at the same time his growing acquaintance with the contemporary European spirit only emphasised his disappointment and despair.

'By God, without home, life is torture !' he writes from abroad to Maikov (in 1867). 'I need Russia for my work, for my life (I speak of no life than that). I am like a fish out of water; I lose all my energies, all my faculties. . . . I felt eventually that so many new ideas had been garnered up that I could write a long article on Russia's relation to Western Europe, and on the upper classes of Russian society. I should, indeed, have plenty to say! The Germans got on my nerves; and our Russian way of living, the life of the upper classes, the faith in Europe and *civilisation* in which those upper classes are steeped—all that got on my nerves too.'

Missing everywhere that intimate human warmth which in the true Russian compensates

Dostoevsky and his Creation

even for his greatest defects, he complains to his niece in a letter from Florence (January, 1869): 'In three months we shall have been exactly two years abroad. In my opinion it is worse than deportation to Siberia. I mean that quite seriously; I am not exaggerating. I cannot understand the Russians abroad. Even though there is a wonderful sky here, and though there are, as for example, in Florence—literally unimaginable and incredible marvels of art, there are lacking many advantages which even in Siberia, as soon as I left the prison, made themselves evident to me.' And later he confesses again to his friend Maikov: 'If you knew what a deep-drawn repulsion, almost approaching hatred, I have conceived for the whole of Western Europe during these four years.'

The problem of Europe and Russia gradually extended itself in Dostoevsky's mind, till it embraced those profound ethical, social, and religious aspects with which his works now became permeated: *The Idiot* (1868-69); *The Possessed* (1871); his rather incoherent *Raw Youth* (1871); his intimate monthly *Journal of an Author* (published during 1876-77), and especially his last novel, *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879-80).

Some Notes on Dostoevsky's Life

VI

Owing to the care of his energetic wife, the material situation of Dostoevsky improved so quickly on his return from abroad that he was able to pay his debts and even to enjoy during the last ten years of his life a certain amount of what one could call comfort. He was now a recognised author. His fame spread and his spiritual influence grew all over Russia. By many he was even considered a modern prophet of whom one expected a 'new word.' For not only by the enigmatic, sometimes even apocalyptic character of his writings, but also by his personality, as well as by his strange life, so full of trials, he gave the impression of a man who was continually striving to master a great secret of life—a secret which he approached perhaps more closely than any of contemporary mortals. In spite of all his past suffering, in spite of the malady which tormented him more and more, he was even now—in his advanced age—full of energy and activity. It seemed as if his sick body had been kept together by the undying fire of his spirit.

The French writer, Melchior de Vogüé, who was at that time acquainted with him, gives a

Dostoevsky and his Creation

fine description of Dostoevsky's personal appearance, a description which is worth quoting. 'I often met Fyodor Mikhailovich,' he writes, 'during the last three years of his life. As a figure he resembled the chief scenes of his novels; whoever had seen it once could not forget it. How much it expressed his own work, his own life! Short, lean, utterly nervous, worn and weighed down by sixty years of misery, he seemed rather faded than aged; with his long beard and fair hair he had the look of an invalid of uncertain age, and yet he was still emanating that 'vitality of a cat' to which he once referred. His face was that of a Russian peasant—of a real mujik of Moscow, with an animated expression, now gloomy, now mild. His forehead was large, wrinkled and bumpy, his temples hollow as if beaten with a hammer; and all these drawn, convulsed features were drooping over a melancholy mouth. Never have I seen on a human face such an expression of accumulated suffering; all the crises of the soul and those of the body had left their mark on it; there one could read even more than in his books the memories from the House of the Dead, long periods of awe, of doubt and of martyrdom. His eyelids, his lips, each muscle of his face, twitched with nervous spasms.

Some Notes on Dostoevsky's Life

Whenever he became excited or angry in disputes over ideas, one could have sworn that one had seen that face before—either on the benches of a criminal court or among the vagabonds whose road leads to the prison gates. At all other moments his face was full of that sad meekness which is characteristic of the old saints painted on the Slavonic ikons. Everything in this man was of the people, with the inexpressible mixture of coarseness, subtlety, and sweetness which the Russian peasants so often possess; and a something indefinably troubling, resulting perhaps from the expression of concentrated thought on that mask of a proletarian. At first sight he often repelled—before his strange personal magnetism began to have effect. . . .’

His ‘vitality of a cat’ seemed to defy the very laws of nature. None the less, his life came to an end sooner than was expected by those who knew him. On the 8th of June, 1880, he delivered in Moscow his ardent speech on Pushkin; some few months later he was just preparing to start anew his *Journal of an Author* when all his plans were cut short by his sudden death on the 28th of January, 1881.

His funeral was one of the most imposing and significant events that Petrograd ever

Dostoevsky and his Creation

witnessed. All classes of the Russian nation, all parties, all political and cultural currents of the great empire were represented there in order to bid a last farewell to the man who was not only the profoundest writer of his epoch, but also a typical embodiment of the mysterious Soul of Russia—of that irrational, enigmatic Soul whose self-crucifixion is perhaps one of the most tragic acts in the great drama of contemporary humanity.

This is a brief outline of Dostoevsky's external biography. His inner biography, which is more important and more interesting, we have to seek in his works.

II

DOSTOEVSKY AND MODERN ART

I

MANY misunderstandings in art and criticism are due to the confusion of Reality with Actuality. The so-called realists (and still more, naturalists) usually take actuality for the only reality, quite forgetting that the former may be but a surface, a casual external veil of the latter. In truth, reality is more than actuality, for it includes the actual, and, at the same time, the deeper, transcendental aspects and possibilities of life. Every presentative talent may become actualist, while to be a realist in the higher sense of the word one must see something more than the mere surface of reality and life.

Hence, art in general and literature in particular may be traced through two main paths of creation, the horizontal and the vertical. The followers of the first are concerned chiefly with actuality—with all the diversity

Dostoevsky and his Creation

of its external forms, conflicts and complications. They are more describers and 'protocolists' than creative inventors. 'Reality for reality's sake'—that is more or less their formula, which in their language simply means : actuality for the sake of actuality. So-called naturalism is nothing but one of the logical extremities of this direction.

The vertical path, on the other hand, shows a tendency to 'penetrate to the very essence of the real' (to use the expression of Dostoevsky himself). It is attracted not so much by the surface as by the depths of reality, by its mysterious and transcendental kernel. '*A realibus ad realiora!*' (From the real to the more real.) That is its note. But this method exposes us to a considerable danger—the danger of losing touch with concrete reality whilst probing its inner essence; and the artist who has lost this touch usually runs the risk of straying into an abstract mysticism or into a 'philosophic' pseudo-symbolism, which distorts, not only reality as such, but, above all, art itself. Modern European literature is burdened with examples of this cheap symbolism and its 'profound' platitudes which reveal, not the mystery of reality, but rather the creative incapacity of its explorers.

Dostoevsky and Modern Art

It is, however, always possible to investigate the 'essence of reality' without the help of abstract and enigmatic symbols. This may be achieved by an endeavour to fathom it without losing hold of actuality—by trying to fix, to symbolise inner reality within the limits of, and by means of, external reality. The principle '*A realibus ad realiora*' is then replaced by *Per realia ad realiora* ('Through the real to the more real'). So we arrive at the point where 'realism' and symbolism meet. Realism resolves itself into the symbolical, and symbolism becomes realistic. It is here also that great art begins, art *sub specie æterni*.

We may find striking experiments in this symbolic realism in several of Ibsen's plays. In the same way, most of the outstanding Russian writers of the nineteenth century—from Gogol to Leonid Andreyev and Fyodor Sologub—instinctively went in the direction of such a realism. They are, as a rule, pure 'realists' in their artistic methods, but their conception of Reality itself is a symbolic one. Behind their external facts one usually feels something more profound and more important, namely, the endeavour to penetrate through them to the secrets of the inner and transcendental reality.

Dostoevsky and his Creation

As a most typical realist of this kind may be quoted Fyodor Dostoevsky.

II

Huysmans throws a light on the character of Dostoevsky's art when he writes in his *Là-bas*: 'The main path, so deeply worn by Zola, would have to be followed; but, at the same time, a parallel track ought to be pursued in the air, in order to explore the things of the hidden beyond—in a word, to produce a spiritual naturalism. In particular, the one who could be mentioned as having approached this conception, is Dostoevsky.'

'Let us call it if you will, spiritual realism,' says Melchior de Vogüé in his book on the Russian novel. And Dostoevsky himself confesses in his letters: 'I have a totally different conception of truth and realism from that of our "realists" and critics. My God! If one could but tell categorically all that we Russians have gone through during the last ten years in the way of spiritual development, all the realists would shriek that it was pure fantasy! And yet it would be pure realism! It *is* the one true, deep realism; theirs is altogether too

Dostoevsky and Modern Art

superficial.' And again, 'I have my own idea about art, and it is this: what most people regard as fantastic and lacking in universality, I hold to be the inmost essence of truth. Arid observations in everyday trivialities I have long ceased to regard as realism—it is quite the reverse.' . . . 'I am a realist in the higher meaning of the term.'

We may define him, then, as a transcendental or symbolic realist, who sees in actuality only a veil of the inner reality. This veil interests him chiefly in so far as it can reveal flashes of the 'hidden beyond.' And he seeks for such flashes, not in 'normal' everyday trivialities, but rather in digressions from them, more—in a deliberate exaggeration of these very digressions.

That explains and justifies the 'pathology' of Dostoevsky's heroes. It is by straining the real and the normal to their utmost limits, to the point of abnormality, that he strives to fathom the essence and divine the riddles of the normal itself. His 'pathology' is not the end but the means. In the sick and the abnormal he often finds, not the opposite, but rather an amplifying of the normal.

His Svidrigailov (in *Crime and Punishment*), for example, reasons: 'A man in health is first a material man; consequently in order to be

Dostoevsky and his Creation

well, he must live only on the plane of the mundane (*i.e.* normal) life. But as soon as he becomes ill, as soon as his normal physical organism gets out of order, then at once the possibility of another world becomes manifest; and the more ill he is, the closer becomes his contact with the other world* till death hurls him straight into it. . . .’ And Prince Myshkin, the hero of *The Idiot*, used to experience immediately before his epileptic fits inexpressible moments of perfect harmony during which his heart, mind, and body awoke with new vigour, and his consciousness broadened to those conditions in which ‘time is no more.’ ‘These moments,’ he thought, ‘short as they are, when I feel such extreme consciousness of myself, and consequently more of life than at other times, are due only to the disease—to the sudden rupture of normal conditions. Therefore, they are not really a higher kind of life, but a lower. . . .’ This reasoning, however, seemed to end in a paradox and led to a further consideration:—
“What matter though it be only disease, an abnormal tension of the brain, if when I recall and analyse the moment, it seems to have been one of harmony and beauty in the highest degree—an instant of deepest sensation, overflowing with unbounded joy and rapture, ecstatic

Dostoevsky and Modern Art

devotion, and completest life?" . . . Vague though this sounds, it was perfectly comprehensible to M., though he knew that it was but a feeble expression of his sensations.'

Such, on the whole, was the standpoint of Dostoevsky himself. That is the reason why he took so little interest in normal average sentiments or characters and why he preferred to become the 'Shakespeare of the madhouse.' And, indeed, almost from the very beginning of his literary career, he was attracted chiefly by that irrational borderland of the human soul 'where all boundaries meet and all contradictions exist side by side'; where biological, intellectual, and spiritual elements become melted into one seething and raging chaos in which individuals are whirled either to madness or to death.

In Dostoevsky's eyes man as such is only the cryptogram of the great riddle, called Human Personality, which must be deciphered. And after the manner of an inquisitor he devises the cruellest experiments, the wildest tortures, to decipher him and to extract from him his secret, his 'essence.' His chief characters are thus at war neither with their environment nor with their social conditions, but with irrational forces of their own consciousness, whose martyrs and victims they become. Raskolnikov,

Dostoevsky and his Creation

Svidrigailov, Stavrogin, Ivan Karamazov, do not fall beneath the burden of external conditions, but beneath the oppression of their inner conflicts. Their downfall is an inner necessity. Rational man perishes, overwhelmed by the irrational man whom each of us carries in his own consciousness.

Hence the reason for every one of Dostoevsky's books being a thrilling inner tragedy—a tragedy of Soul and Spirit—rather than a novel in the usual meaning of the word. Moreover, in contemporary art, Dostoevsky is the greatest, and perhaps the only real, tragedian. As has been pointed out already by Merezhkovsky, his whole work can be best defined as tragic art *par excellence*.

In what way does this art differ chiefly from current, modern art? To understand Dostoevsky and his position in European literature, this question must be answered first.

III

If we consider works of art from the standpoint of their genesis, we discover two main motives of creation. The first springs from an impulse to find an escape from one's own self

Dostoevsky and Modern Art

and reality; the second from an attempt to divine one's own self and reality.

To those who seek escape, creation becomes an artistic game, a beautiful illusion, which now conceals, now idealises and corrects, that actuality in which we live. The artist dwells in the new imaginary and illusory world created by himself, luxuriating in it, playing with its various combinations like a child with soap-bubbles. Art becomes a mere spiritual hedonism. Such a choice finds its expression to a great extent in narcotic romanticism, as well as in that superficial æstheticism whose disciples accept art as an illusory subterfuge from actual life.

To those, on the other hand, who are impelled to explore beneath the surface of reality, creation is not a spiritual hedonism, but a spiritual tragedy. For them creative art is an endless search after a solution of the insoluble problem of Life, with all its inner conflicts and antinomies. They cannot accept life unless they solve its riddle, *i.e.*, its meaning. They endeavour, however, to penetrate to 'the very essence of the real' not by mere reasoning (as philosophers) but by their entire consciousness, by their personal experience, pain and suffering. Their creative effort is therefore a continual questioning,

Dostoevsky and his Creation

an ever-recurring Golgotha, as well as an unceasing struggle to escape their own downfall.

Thus did Nietzsche create. Thus did Baudelaire, in part, create; and thus only did Dostoevsky create his greatest works. .

Such an art is very seldom 'pleasant' or amusing as this word is applied to art for entertainment's sake. It also attaches little importance to the external polish. But it develops another quality: it becomes majestic and elemental. An example of this is seen in Dostoevsky's novels, which spread beyond all bounds of conventional form like flooded rivers overflowing their banks. They burst the fetters of academic rules because they are stronger than all rules. The æsthetic and sentimental writings of many modern authors can no more be compared with Dostoevsky's works than the graceful beauty of a rocket can be likened to the superb chaos of a volcano. Such an elemental art is capable of being beautiful without being 'pretty' and strong without being brutal. By its character it even can embody the great synthesis of æsthetics, ethics, psychology, philosophy, and religion.

An attempt to achieve this synthesis we find in the works of Dostoevsky. Dominated by

Dostoevsky and Modern Art

religious, philosophic and social ideas his writings are as far from any petty social 'purpose' as they are from dogmatic æsthetics. Sometimes Dostoevsky becomes chaotic and incoherent as artist, simply because he is more than a mere 'artist.' He has so much of seething inner content that now and then he fails to master it. And even when he masters it, we feel in his writings a strange lack of proportion between the development of the inner and the external events. While the former grow on such a colossal scale that they mock all laws of space and time, the latter occupy as a rule but a few days. On the other hand, this very disproportion gives to his novels that dynamic tension, the like of which it is impossible to find in any contemporary author.

IV

Dostoevsky's influence on the modern literature of Russia, and of Europe generally, is great, greater than that of Tolstoy. It may suffice to mention the names of such writers as Nietzsche, Bourget, Andreyev, Hauptmann, and Knut Hamsun (in his earlier works).

Dostoevsky and his Creation

None the less, the synthesis he attempted has been split into fragments by his followers. Some of them have seized upon the clinical aspects of Dostoevsky's work as a new species of 'sensational' literature, frequently lapsing into pornography, as in the case of Artsibashev. Others have taken possession of the tragic antitheses and antinomies in Dostoevsky's method but, as they have not organically experienced them, they produce, not tragic art, but a tragic pose. This can be observed even in so talented a writer as Andreyev, who only wastes his strength in too deliberate an endeavour to be 'strong' at all costs. A third group has been seduced by the shibboleths of the 'naked soul,' of 'romanticism of the nerves,' and psychology for psychology's sake. A fourth order of writers began to develop more fully the religious and philosophical problems in Dostoevsky. (The best known of these is Dmitry Merezhkovsky). There is still a fifth variety which has tried to appropriate more or less of Dostoevsky's nervous technique and mannerisms. In short, instead of a tendency towards synthetic tragic art we see but the development of its divided component parts. We have writers with the affectation of tragedy. We have scintillating journalists who

Dostoevsky and Modern Art

prefer the spiritual circus to the spiritual Golgotha. But truly tragic artists we have none. One could almost say that the very spirit of our age excludes them.

III

DOSTOEVSKY AS PSYCHOLOGIST

I

It is a pity that in spite of all the important transvaluations achieved by modern psychology, we are still so closely bound to the Procrustean bed of many old psychological prejudices and dogmas. Take, for instance, the general attitude towards the so-called pathologic states of human consciousness. All that transcends certain ready-made psycho-physiological norms we are inclined to consider as pathologic sickness which must be transformed into normal and healthy conditions, quite forgetting that any such attempt to draw a strict line between normality and pathology may often lead to utterly erroneous conclusions. Who can determine where the normal ends and the abnormal begins? Moreover, what at the first glance seems a psychopathic mental deficiency, may prove in the end to be a super-normal manifestation of man's consciousness

Dostoevsky as Psychologist

and a means to further growth and evolution.

This distinction between abnormal and super-normal should surely be of great importance. From the 'normal' point of view, both aspects are equally pathological; none the less, their directions are exactly contrary: the former leads to a degenerate regression, while the latter opens on a wider progenerate plane of the human soul, leading to a 'higher health.' Thanks only to the confusion of abnormal and super-normal, was it possible to class, as Lombroso did, the genius with the insane or criminal, and to accept as an ideal the average-normal type with its coarse-grained nervous system and limited psyche.

It is too often forgotten that the growth of the individual soul is in itself a 'pathologic' process. The primitive undifferentiated character whose self is still completely absorbed and dominated by the collective psyche, represents, as a rule, the ideal of health and unconscious harmony. However, as soon as he severs himself from such a collective soul in the name of an independent growth and the assertion of his own individuality, he not only hastens his digression from the 'normal,' undifferentiated type, but runs also the danger of inner

Dostoevsky and his Creation

self-division, which is the natural result of a growing and profound self-consciousness. And, strangely enough, the more advanced this painful process the less desire he has to reduce it again to the 'healthy' and comfortable psycho-physiological formulæ laid down by those apostles of mathematical 'normality' who wish to convert the individual into a rational psychological machine.

'As a matter of fact,' ironises Dostoevsky's hero of the *Letters from the Underworld*, 'if ever there is discovered a formula which shall exactly express our wills and whims, which shall make it absolutely clear what those wills depend upon, and what laws they are governed by, and what means of diffusion they possess, and what tendencies they follow under given circumstances; if ever there is discovered a formula which shall be mathematical in its precision, then man will have ceased even to exist. Who would care to exercise his will-power according to a table of logarithms? In such a case man would become, not a human being at all, but an organ-handle, or something of the kind.'

'In other words, true psychology begins beyond any ready-made psychological 'tables of logarithms.' By transcending them, however, we become aware that our self-consciousness

Dostoevsky as Psychologist

is but a small part of our entire consciousness, since the latter includes that mysterious realm of the Unconscious which contains perhaps the final riddle of human personality. Not the 'logarithms,' but the quest and conquest of the Unconscious thus becomes the task of a profound psychologist, and such a quest has more to do with pathology than with the admired 'normality'; it also often goes beyond the limits of mere science, for it demands at times as much subtlety and intuition as any work of art.

In the exploration of the Unconscious (which undoubtedly is the greatest discovery of modern psychology) literature anticipated science in many respects. One of the most daring pioneers in these dangerous regions was Dostoevsky. In his dissection of the human consciousness he presented us with all possible aspects of the abnormal mind, and this with such a penetrative psychological intuition that his novels are recognised by scientific authorities as most valuable studies of psycho-pathology—in spite of the fact that Dostoevsky treated his pathologic 'cases' not as a scientist but exclusively as an artist and thinker, being interested in them only in so far as they reflected the deeper, spiritual, processes of man's soul.

Dostoevsky and his Creation

II

It is characteristic of Dostoevsky that he concerns himself mainly with that transient area of our consciousness where the irrational passes over into the rational, the unconscious into the conscious, the 'fantastic' into the real. He is a supreme master only on that shifting border where nothing is determined, fixed, and firm; where 'all contradictions exist side by side.'

This explains why dreams, for instance, play such an important part in his novels. Long before Freud's and Jung's discoveries, Dostoevsky endeavoured to arrive at the fundamental nature of dreams and to show their significance in a new light, as symbolic projections of our unconscious into our conscious Ego. Take the grandiose nightmare of Ivan Karamazov; or the hallucinations of the consumptive Hippolyte (in *The Idiot*); or the curious connection between reality and dream in Velchaninov's nightmare (in *The Eternal Husband*). Dostoevsky's favourite themes are however the chaotic conflicts between the conscious and unconscious. For no one realised more profoundly than he that our conscious self is all too often the slave of our

Dostoevsky as Psychologist

unconscious or subliminal self, and that a truth of the former may be rejected by the latter as a lie. What seems good to our conscious and reasonable Ego, our subliminal self may consider as evil, for it possesses its own independent will, its own law and logic. Even the motives of most responsible human actions are usually concealed in our subliminal 'double,' by which the individual may be cheated and duped, in spite of all his conscious will, his logic and reason.

The unrestrained up-rushes of the Unconscious we can study best in Dostoevsky's characters, who in the main represent all possible shades of the strongest subliminal instinct and impulse of the human Ego—the impulse to individual self-assertion. Putting forward splendid psychological proofs that this impulse might be stronger even than the famous 'will to live' with all its utilitarian tendencies, Dostoevsky repeatedly pointed out that in cases where destruction, adversity, suffering, and evil emphasise such a self-assertion, they may be dearer to man than happiness, dearer than any normal interests and advantages, dearer than life itself. So his hero from the *Underworld* challenges defiantly: 'Who was it first said that man does evil only because he is blind to his own interests, but that if he were enlightened,

Dostoevsky and his Creation

if his eyes were opened to his real, his normal interests, he would at once cease to do evil, and become virtuous and noble for the reason that, being now enlightened and brought to understand what is best for him, he would discern his true advantage only in what is good (since it is a known thing that no man of set purpose acts against his own interest), and therefore would of necessity also *do* what is good? Oh, the utter artlessness of the prattlers! . . . Does not reason err in estimating what is advantageous? May it not be that man occasionally loves something besides prosperity? May it not be that he loves *adversity*? And may not adversity be as good for him as happiness? Certainly there are times when man *does* love adversity, and love it passionately. Man is a frivolous creature, and, like a chess-player, cares more for the process of attaining his goal than for the goal itself. Besides, who knows (for it never does to be sure) that the aims which man strives for upon earth may not be contained in this ceaseless continuation of the process of the attainment—that is to say, in the process which is comprised in the living of life rather than in the aim itself, which, of course, is contained in the formula that twice two make four? Yet, gentlemen, this formula is not life at all; it is

Dostoevsky as Psychologist

only the beginning of death! At all events, men have always been afraid to think that twice two make four, and I am afraid of it too!'

And while talking about a future Millennium—built on strict logic and reason, the same hero adds: 'I should not be surprised if amidst all this order and regularity of the future, there should arise suddenly, from some quarter or another, some gentleman of low-born—or, rather, of retrograde and cynical demeanour, who, setting his arms akimbo, should say to you all: "How now, gentlemen? Would it not be a good thing if, with one consent, we were to kick all this solemn wisdom to the winds, and to send those logarithms to the devil, and to begin to live our lives again according to our own stupid whims?" Yet this would be nothing: the really shameful part of the business would be that this gentleman would find a goodly number of adherents. Such is always man's way. . . . Whence do savants have it that man needs a normal, a virtuous will? What, in particular, has made these pundits imagine that what man most needs is a will which is acutely alive to man's interests? Why, what man most needs is an *independent* will—no matter what the cost of such independence of volition, nor what it may lead to!'

Dostoevsky and his Creation

The stronger the impulse of this 'independent will' in our subliminal Ego the more helpless become the efforts of our reasonable, normal and 'virtuous' will. The collision between them may lead to the cleavage of personality—to a split between the conscious self and the second self. Versilov (in *The Raw Youth*) describes such a state in the following terms: 'I am really split in two mentally, and I am horribly afraid of it. It is just as though one's *second self* were standing beside one; one is sensible and rational oneself, but the other self is impelled to do something perfectly senseless, and sometimes very funny; and suddenly you notice you are longing to do that amusing thing, goodness knows why. I once knew a doctor who suddenly began whistling in church, at his father's funeral.'

But that is only the first stage of the conflict between the conscious and unconscious. For, as we shall see in our further travels into the subliminal domain, this dividing process may become more intricate and involved through the differentiation of the unconscious itself into its antagonistic elements—a differentiation, which, according to its direction, may lead either to a new unity or to a complete dissolution of personality.

Dostoevsky as Psychologist

III

To one of his very first stories Dostoevsky has given the significant title, *The Double*, depicting in it a certain Goliadkin whose consciousness is split into two opposed parts, two opposed wills and morals. His normal self and his second self are in conflict with each other, and their antagonism is so far developed that his *alter ego* reveals itself in the shape of his double, committing actions which are in absolute contradiction of the promptings of his 'virtuous' and logical will. In consequence, our hero finds himself entangled in many unpleasant and tragi-comical situations. His 'normal' self is utterly embarrassed and 'troubled by the ignominies of his own treacherous double. Unable to get rid of him, Goliadkin finally tries to reconcile himself with the 'other Goliadkin,' to make of him a friend and brother. He kisses him with a most friendly intention, but in vain—his double's kiss proves to be a kiss of Judas; as a reconciliation is impossible, the self-divided Goliadkin becomes mad.

It is not difficult to guess that this grotesque hero contains the psychological embryo of all the 'split' characters created by Dostoevsky

Dostoevsky and his Creation

in his later and greater novels. He is a rough prototype of Raskolnikov, of Versilov, of Stavrogin, of Ivan Karamazov. Their tragedy is Goliadkin's tragedy—amplified and projected upon a deeper, spiritual plane. Like Goliadkin, they have their doubles which rise out of the unconscious, overwhelming their will, their logic and reason. And according to the extent of his inner split, the individual lives now with the first, now with the second self, or what is still more oppressive, with both simultaneously. Now he is a saint, an hour later a sinner; but he also may be both at the same time.

'The more I have recognised what is good and what constitutes "the great and the beautiful," the deeper I have plunged into the mire and the more I have been ready to smear myself over with the sticky stuff. But the most curious point of all is this—that the mood which I have described never seemed to be a mere fortuitous happening with me, but my permanent, my normal condition, and therefore neither a weakness nor a vice,' cynically confesses the hero in the *Underworld*.

'A man with lofty mind and heart begins with the ideal of the Madonna and ends with the ideal of Sodom. What is still more awful is that a man with the ideal of Sodom in his

Dostoevsky as Psychologist

soul does not renounce the ideal of the Madonna, and his heart may be on fire with that ideal, genuinely on fire, just as in his days of youth and innocence. Yes, man is broad, too broad, indeed! I'd have him narrower!'

Thus exclaims Mitya Karamazov, while Versilov confesses: 'I can with perfect convenience experience two opposite feelings at one and the same time, and not of course through my own will.'

'I am capable of desiring to do something good and of feeling pleasure from it; at the same time, I desire evil and feel pleasure from that, too,' writes Stavrogin in his last letter.

As we see in Goliadkin and in Ivan's nightmare, the subliminal second self may become co-conscious to such an extent as to be projected outside the individual in the form of a hallucination. In certain cases another person altogether may play the part of one's spiritual *alter ego* in the broadest meaning of this word, for there are unconscious 'telepathic' connections between man and man the importance of which is not yet sufficiently realised.¹ The delirious Raskolnikov

¹ Space does not allow a detailed comparison of Dostoevsky's pathologic characters with the results of the modern scientific psycho-pathological researches, made by Charcot, Ribot, Janet, Freud, Jung, etc., although such a study would be highly interesting.

Dostoevsky and his Creation

finds such a living second self in the cynical Svidrigailov. An analogous relation we see also between Smerdyakov and his half-brother, Ivan Karamazov, and again, in a certain degree, between the passive Myshkin and the passion-maniac Rogozhin (in *The Idiot*).

IV

Reading between the lines of Dostoevsky's novels, it is not difficult to guess that he also was permanently tortured by his own second self, perhaps by many selves. He was, in fact, the most 'split,' the most divided, of all European writers. And, contrary to all the preachers of mediocre normality and normal mediocrity, he saw in such a process rather a necessary higher phase of individual development. So much so that in one of his letters, written in 1880 (a few months before his death), he made the following confession on this subject: 'But now, to what you have told me of your inward duality. That trait is indeed common to all . . . that is, to all who are not wholly commonplace. Nay, it is common to human nature, though it does not evince itself so strongly in all as it does in you. It is precisely on this ground that

Dostoevsky as Psychologist

I cannot but regard you as a twin soul, for your inward duality corresponds most exactly to my own. Such duality simply means that you have a strong sense of yourself, much aptness of self-criticism, and an innate feeling for your moral duty to yourself and mankind. If your intelligence were less developed, if you were more limited, you would be less sensitive, and would not possess that duality. Rather the reverse: in its stead would have appeared great arrogance. Yet such duality is a great torment.'

Dostoevsky obviously accepted this torment, realising that man's inner evolution leads perhaps through the most painful and dangerous split of his psyche, and that only he who is strong enough to sustain and master such a disintegration without being ruined by it may arrive at a new conscious unity and a supernormal synthesis with all its new horizons and new dawns.

Neither Dostoevsky nor any of his really important heroes attained such a complete and final synthesis. Most of them remained in the phase of inner differentiation. And the more they suffered from it the deeper they penetrated into themselves, losing in their introspection all regard for the *milieu* and scarcely noticing the external world in which they moved.

Dostoevsky and his Creation

Furthermore, their strange philosophy is first of all the result of such an inner suffering. They do not 'think' their thoughts; they feel, they live them. Their ideas are not so much the product of their intellect as of their 'psychology,' which shows again and again that the personality, once arrived at a conscious craving for a higher self-assertion, inevitably becomes self-divided, and that owing to its disintegration, man's consciousness may even turn into the battlefield of transcendental cosmic antinomies that are striving in our souls—striving perhaps for a future reconciliation and synthesis on a higher plane.

The longing for such a synthesis made Dostoevsky seek for that inner Value which would lead to such a reconciliation, giving to our existence the completest fullness and assertion: it made him seek and struggle for an absolute Value.

IV

THE STRUGGLE FOR AN ABSOLUTE VALUE

I

THE unceasing urge of Dostoevsky's creative art was the search for an Absolute Value. The most tormenting question of his characters was: Is there a God or not? In other words: Is there or is there not an Absolute Value towards which the will of man and mankind may be directed for the sake of a highest self-assertion? If not then the existence of both Man and Cosmos becomes something accidental and devoid of any higher meaning. Therefore, once cognisant of that, the individual with an uncompromising 'serious conscience' must either cease to exist, or must accept his own will as the only law, and his personal Ego as the highest Value.

'If God exists, all is His will and from His will I cannot escape! If not, it is all my will, and I am bound to show self-will. . . . Because all will has become mine,' proclaims the maniac Kirillov (in *The Possessed*). And the nightmare

Dostoevsky and his Creation

devil whispers the same thought to Ivan Karamazov: 'Since there is anyway no God, the new man may well become man-God, even if he is the only one in the whole world; and promoted to his new position, he may light-heartedly overstep all the barriers of the old morality, of the old slave-man, if necessary. Where God stands, the place is holy. . . . "All things are lawful," and that is the end of it.'

But the formula, 'All things are lawful' is in itself a negation of Value as such. Self-will, so categorically proclaimed by Kirillov, negates not only Absolute Value, but all values in general—for they become simply caprices, casual projections and illusory creations of one's own self-will. The will, yearning for the value created by the will itself, seizes not a value, but its own self: instead of will for Value's sake, we get in essence will for will's sake, that is to say, we arrive at a complete absence of real Value, at a complete moral void with its 'beyond good and evil. . . .' This is the terrible void into which after his crime Raskolnikov plunged. This void swallowed also Svidrigailov, Stavrogin, and finally even Ivan Karamazov in whom the struggle for Value reached its highest pitch.

The Struggle for an Absolute Value

In other words, the problem of God became to Dostoevsky identical with the problem of Value—in so far as the Absolute Value (*i.e.* the absolute standard of good and evil) can receive authority and sanction only from an absolute Being. He came to the logical conclusion that without God every possibility of such a standard must be replaced by casual values, based either on the power of external authority or on the caprices of self-will. Denying God, moreover, man's consciousness must recognise itself as a meaningless, casual, and momentary flash, and, consequently, renounce for ever that path of highest self-assertion which finds its expression in individual immortality. In such a case, 'I need but live my appointed day,' as Dostoevsky writes in one of his letters, 'and let the rest go hang. And if that is really so—and if I am clever enough not to let myself be caught by the standing laws, why should I not kill, rob, steal, or at any rate live at the expense of others? For I shall die, and all the rest will die and utterly vanish.'

All the vital, eternal questions thus depend in Dostoevsky's opinion on the solution of this most vital problem of humanity: 'Is there a God or not?' Realising this standpoint we can easily grasp the significance of Dostoevsky's

Dostoevsky and his Creation

poignant admission that during his whole life 'he was tortured consciously or unconsciously by the problem of God's existence. . . .' He wanted God for the sake of an absolute assertion of man and life. In his search and craving for such an assertion he made the most ruthless delvings into the human soul, but the deeper he probed the more his own inner self became divided into two opposing parts, two opposing truths and values, on which his seeking will was always shattered.

'Yes, till the secret is revealed,' prompts his nightmare devil, 'there are two sorts of truth for me—one, their truth, yonder, which I know nothing about so far, and the other my own (*i.e.* "all things are lawful"). And there is no knowing which of them will turn out the better.'

Certain pages of Dostoevsky's works bear witness that this duality of consciousness reached in him the widest limits. And his drama of consciousness went hand in hand with the drama of Value.

To comprehend this double process, we must interpose a brief psychological digression.

The Struggle for an Absolute Value

II

The search after an Absolute Value is, in essence, identical with the struggle for a complete assertion of personality in the face of the Universe. For the more advanced the individual consciousness, the more intense is its need for the highest self-assertion. This, however, can follow two main directions which are quite divergent, corresponding to the two attitudes of Microcosmos (Individuality) to Cosmos.

According to one of them, the Microcosmos recognises itself as a component part of Cosmos, and finds its highest assertion in a perfect harmony between the individual will and the universal will of God and Cosmos. We may call this the mystical path of consciousness, the path of the God-Man; its most unswerving followers we find in ancient India and among the Christian mystics.

Adopting the opposite attitude, the Individual strives to become an absolutely autonomous and independent entity. Instead of harmony with Cosmos, he may even aspire after the subjugation of the cosmic will to his own personal will. To this end he experiments with the mysterious laws of earth and heaven, and,

Dostoevsky and his Creation

endeavouring to exploit them, he has in course of time invented sorcery, astrology, and all the many forms of magic art and practice. Failing continually in his attempts at such a subjugation, the Individual would humble himself as a slave before a hostile power—awaiting, in the meantime, the moment when he may rebel once more and manifest his own 'independent will.'

This path may be called the *magical* path or the path of the Man-God, as distinct from that of the God-Man. The mystic God-Man enlarges his consciousness to the cosmic consciousness, aiming at *cosmic individualism*. The magician Man-God, on the other hand, opposes to Cosmos his personal Ego as an equivalent entity and strives for *cosmic egotism*. The first advances in the direction of his highest spiritual, and the second rather in the direction of his egoistic 'biological,' self.

The Aryan race affords many examples of the mystical tendency, while the magical has found a stronger expression among the Semites. The Jewish conception of Jehovah was largely magical, for He was worshipped in fear, and usually manifested Himself by impressive external, *i.e.*, magical, means—now as a burning bush, now as tempest, now as thunder. Hence Christ made the greatest transvaluation of values

The Struggle for an Absolute Value

when he deliberately replaced the magical conception of God by a mystical conception. With the words, 'The Kingdom of God is within you,' he transferred God from outside to inside—into the very consciousness of man—changing the Old Testament slave of Jehovah into a son of God. Such an attitude implies the development of our self in the direction of the universal Self—and that not by dissolving the individuality in the cosmic Whole (as in Nirvana), but by including the latter in man's consciousness. Christ Himself became the embodiment of His own message through raising His individual consciousness to such a level that He was 'perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.'

This transvaluation was so immense that ages must pass before humanity can seize it in its entirety. None the less, in giving an impulse to the mystical element in man's consciousness, Christ has not destroyed the magical element in it, but rather aroused it to a re-action, to a still greater activity. Man's soul became definitely split into its two component parts, the mystical and the magical, whose subliminal antagonism developed into a more and more *conscious* duality.

With this in view we may now draw an

** Dostoevsky and his Creation*

important distinction between the subconscious and the super-conscious, which have so often been confused in spite of the fact that they have just the opposite tendencies and directions. The subconscious corresponds to the subliminal region of the magical element, while the super-conscious corresponds to the subliminal region of the mystical element in our consciousness. Thus, the subconscious and the super-conscious may be defined as two opposing factors, forming the duality of the Unconscious.

III

In his longing for an Absolute Value, Dostoevsky carried this duality to its extreme limits, expressed in the antitheses of God-Man and Man-God. These antitheses were not alternate or periodic in him, but acted simultaneously, compelling him to look at the same moment upon 'both truths.' And in the mazes of their depths, Dostoevsky made, long before Nietzsche, a radical and double transvaluation of all values—from the standpoint of God-Man and that of Man-God.

Discovering (as we shall see) in Man-God but an illusory self-assertion, leading to self-

The Struggle for an Absolute Value

destruction and to the void of 'all things are lawful,' he desperately took refuge in the God-Man, *i.e.*, in Christ, in whom alone he ultimately found a Value, a way and a meaning of life. He affirms on so many occasions that 'there is nothing lovelier, deeper, more sympathetic, more manly and more perfect than the Saviour'; he makes even his Man-God Kirillov exclaim that Christ was the One who gave meaning to life, and that the whole 'planet, with everything on it, is mere madness without that Man. . . .' But to find in Christ the Value and meaning of life is not sufficient for an inquiring mind. Still more is needed—the certainty and the guarantee that the value of Christ is an incontestable, an absolute Value. If Christ be really God, or at least the proved messenger of God, then this is a guarantee of the absoluteness of His Value. In God must be the Truth, and Absolute Value can be only where there is Absolute Truth. Excluded from it, outside it, Christ is not an incontestable, but merely an illusory Value in the realm of other illusions. But where is the guarantee that in Christ is really the Truth?

Sorrowing over the impossibility of a certain answer to this question, Dostoevsky makes in a letter the following confession: 'If any one

Dostoevsky and his Creation

could prove to me that Christ is outside the truth, and if the truth really did exclude Christ, I should prefer to stay with Christ and not with truth. . . .'

In this choice lies the tragedy of Dostoevsky, as well as of all *God-seekers*, that is, of all those who are seeking God as a guarantee and sanction for Value. (Such a God-seeker is Shatov in *The Possessed*.) But in the divergence between Value and Truth lies also the drama of the opposite category, the category of *God-strugglers*, portrayed, for example, in Ivan Karamazov. While the God-seeker recognises the possibility of Value (the Value of Christ, for instance), but doubts God, the God-struggler does not doubt God's existence, but he realises Him not as a Value. More, seeing all the misery of our existence, he may turn from God and reject Him out of *moral indignation*, if, instead of meaning and Value, he finds in Him mere injustice, mere mockery of life and mankind.

IV

Dostoevsky was a typical God-seeker. As such he laboured to overcome his inner split by a reconciliation between Truth and Value, but

The Struggle for an Absolute Value

neither his logic nor his will could fully accomplish this purpose. So he was doomed to remain, up to his very end, on the boundary of half-belief and doubt, striking proofs of which we may find in many of his characters, as well as in his intimate letters.

Thus in a letter to Mme Fonvizin, he confesses: 'I want to say to you about myself, that I am a child of this age, a child of unfaith and scepticism, and probably—indeed I know it—shall remain so to the end of my life. How dreadfully has it tormented me—and torments me even now—this longing for faith, which is all the stronger for the proofs I have against it. . . .' This admission was made in 1854 during his exile in Siberia. And in 1880, shortly before his death, he writes in another letter: 'My dear, my revered Mlle N. N., do you believe in Christ and His covenants? If you believe—or if you *desire* very much to believe—then devote yourself to Him, and the torments arising from this inner duality will be considerably relieved; your spirit will be pacified, and this is the main thing.'

Very characteristic is also one of his statements to K. O. Kavelin, where he insists that 'never, even in Europe, was atheism expressed with such power' as in his own novels. 'I do not,'

Dostoevsky and his Creation

he assures him, 'believe naïvely as a boy in Christ whom I confess. My hosanna has passed through great whirlwinds of doubt.'

These 'whirlwinds of doubt' are the works of Dostoevsky in which every defence of belief seems to be at the same time the most vigorous justification of unbelief and atheism. This we notice even in his last novel, *Brothers Karamazov*, which proves perhaps more than any of his works that he really did not believe 'naïvely as a boy' in the Christ whom he confessed. As we shall try to show, there lay concealed beneath Dostoevsky's 'belief' one of the greatest tragedies that can occur in man's soul.

V

'COSMIC MUTINY'

(A CONTRIBUTION TO THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SATANISM)

I

IN his strange confession, filled with anathemas upon all commonplace ideas, ideals and values, the broken hero of the *Letters from the Underworld* exclaims: 'So at length, gentlemen, we have reached the conclusion that the best thing for us to do is to do nothing at all, but to sink into a state of contemplative inertia. For that purpose, all hail the underworld! True, I said above that I profoundly envy the normal man; yet under the condition in which I see him placed, I have no wish to be he. Yet I am lying. I am lying because I know that it is not the underworld which is so much better, but something else—something else for which I am hungry, but which I shall never find.'

This he says after having lived his whole life in the 'underworld' like a crab in its shell.

**Dostoevsky and his Creation*

And, indeed, offer him happiness, comfort and luxury—he will laugh at your offer. He finds his dirty den more to his taste, although he is perfectly aware that his ‘underworld’ is nothing but a subterfuge from the real world with all its iron laws of Nature, its arithmetical ‘normality’ and hide-bound rules. ‘What have I to do,’ he asks, ‘with the laws of Nature or with arithmetics, when all the time those laws and the formula that twice two make four do not meet with my acceptance? Of course, I am not going to beat my head against a wall if I have not the requisite strength to do so; yet I am not going to accept the wall merely because I have run up against it, and have no means to knock it down.’

Life has insulted him and thrown him aside because he was too weak for it. None the less, he wants to assert himself even through his weakness. Instead of accepting the ‘wall’ he protests against it in his own way—by a kind of moral *hara-kiri*: in a state of cold, malignant and permanent rancour he retires into his underworld in order to nurse there the ‘insult,’ to nurse it for forty years, adding to it as many shameful details as possible, taunting himself with his own humiliation, exaggerating it constantly—in fear lest his rancour should lose

‘*Cosmic Mutiny*’

its bitterness and his passive protest its strength.

Rejected by the world he takes revenge—by rejecting the world, deliberately and on principle. In his ‘contemplative inertia’ he dares to oppose his weak, impotent Ego against the whole social order, against the whole of Nature and of humanity. And through such a protest he transforms his greatest weakness into an illusion of the greatest strength. His growing personal misfortunes serve only to emphasise and justify his defiance, his indignation, and spite; and the more real pretexts he finds to be indignant, the stronger, the ‘happier’ he feels. Rob him of his passive protest; deprive him of his ‘unavenged suffering’—and he will lose his only moral support, his only illusion of strength, of power and self-assertion. Hence he is afraid of the mere possibility of being satisfied. He loves his degradation and shame in so far as they alone give him the right to that passive revenge which has become his permanent inner necessity, his strongest spring of life. That is why he prefers his underworld to any happiness and comfort.

We have another interesting example of the same psychology in the hysterical Nastasya Filipovna (in *The Idiot*) whose injured soul

Dostoevsky and his Creation

'had gone to such lengths that it preferred to sit and nurse its contempt and hatred in solitude rather than mount to heights of hitherto unattainable splendour.' She deliberately ran away from the beloved Myshkin into shame and death only because she *did not want* to become happy after all the injuries she had so undeservedly suffered. Her rival, Aglaya, sums up her whole attitude in this malignant diagnosis: 'All you could love was your shame and the perpetual thought that you were disgraced and insulted. If you were less shameful, or had no cause at all for shame, you would be still more unhappy than you are now.' And even Myshkin observes that in her 'perpetual admission of guilt (*i.e.*, in her perpetual self-laceration and shame) she probably finds some dreadful unnatural satisfaction—as though she were revenging herself upon some one.'

Something analogous we may find even in the little Nellie (in the *Insulted and Injured*) of whom the hero of the novel writes: 'She had been ill-treated; her hurt could not be healed, and she seemed purposely trying to aggravate her wound, as though she enjoyed her own pain by this *egoism of suffering*, if I may so express it. This aggravation of suffering and this revelling in it I could understand; it is the

‘ Cosmic Mutiny ’

enjoyment of many of the insulted and injured, oppressed by destiny, and smarting under the sense of its injustice. . . . She seemed trying to astonish and alarm us by her exploits, her caprices and wild pranks, as though she really were asserting herself against us.’

II

If we now transfer this indignation, this ‘ecstasy of spite,’ with its craving for revenge and suffering, to a higher, spiritual, or religious plane, we obtain a striking category of Dostoevsky’s heroes—the category of God-strugglers, of cosmic Nihilists and mutineers.

The chief characteristic, common to all of them, is the protest of the individual consciousness against the vile and vicious order or will of Cosmos. They diverge, however, at the inner conception of this will. A ‘mutineer’ who realises God behind the Universe becomes a God-struggler; when he feels behind it only a dark Power, an unconscious senseless complex of blind forces, he becomes a cosmic Nihilist.

‘If God exists, all is His will and from His will I cannot escape!’ exclaims the God-struggler; none the less, he rebels against God when,

Dostoevsky and his Creation

instead of Value and meaning of life, he sees in Him a mere tyrannical will in whose mysterious grip suffer the world and mankind. He opposes God's will by his own *independent* will—no matter what his protest and 'independence of volition' may lead to. In the same manner a cosmic Nihilist raises his personal protest against the merciless dark Power.

The psychology of such a nihilism is clearly expressed in Hippolyte's confession (in *The Idiot*), read by him before his tragi-comic attempt to commit suicide. Alluding to Holbein's cruel picture of Christ's descent from the Cross, he remarks, for instance, that to one looking at that painting 'Nature appears as some huge, implacable, dumb monster, or, still better, some enormous mechanical engine of modern days.' And again, 'I thought some one led me by the hand and showed me, by the light of a candle, a huge, loathsome insect, which he assured me was that very force, that very almighty, dumb, irresistible Power, and laughed at the indignation with which I received this information. It was impossible for me to go on living when life was full of such detestable, strange, tormenting forms. Nor could I bear to be subordinate to that dark, horrible force which was embodied in the form of the loathsome insect. If I had the power to

‘Cosmic Mutiny’

prevent my own birth I should certainly never have consented to accept existence under such ridiculous conditions. However, I have the power to end my existence, although I do but give back days that are already numbered. It is an insignificant gift, and my revolt is equally insignificant.’

In the same manner the ‘superman’ Kirillov bases his revolt on the assumption that ‘all the planet is a lie and rests on a lie and on mockery. So then, the very laws of the planet are a lie and the vaudeville of devils.’

‘As I find this comedy stupid, unbearable, and insulting, I sentence this Nature—which created me insolently only to make me suffer—to disappear with me. As I cannot carry out my sentence in the whole by destroying Nature together with myself, I must destroy myself at least, and so be rid of a tyranny for which no one is responsible,’ declares another ‘mutineer’ in the *Sentence* (a remarkable psychological document, given in the *Journal of an Author*).

‘It is not that I don’t accept God, it is the world created by Him I don’t and cannot accept. Even if parallel lines do meet and I see it myself, I shall see it and say that they have met, but still I won’t accept it. I don’t want harmony. *From love for humanity*—I don’t want it. I

Dostoevsky and his Creation

would rather remain with my unavenged suffering and unsatisfied indignation, *even if I were wrong,*' exclaims the God-struggler, Ivan Karamazov.

The protest of these characters is directed, as we see, against the transcendental author of the world's chaos. Their psychological motives are almost the same as those of the hero from the *Underworld*; but the plane, the inner standard and the tension are higher and more tragic.

The magical element of consciousness is craving for an absolute self-assertion in spite of God, in spite of the blind 'dark Power.' In both cases the individual will opposes the cosmic will as *equivalent* to the latter. However, 'if God exists, all is His will and from His will I cannot escape.' I may strive with Him, but a protesting struggle against Him is not yet an escape from His power. I can evade His tyranny only by destroying Him. As this is impossible, I have but one alternative—that of destroying myself by my *free* will, since in such a voluntary suicide my self-will may attain the climax of 'revolt' and independence. The same final issue awaits the cosmic Nihilist, who can overthrow Nature's implacable despotism only by voluntary death.

' Cosmic Mutiny '

So the principle of self-will leads consistently to self-destruction as the highest pitch of individual protest against God and Nature. This is best illustrated in Kirillov, who announces before his suicide: 'I have always been surprised at every one's going on living. Can it be that no one in the whole planet, after making an end of God and believing in his own self-will, will dare to express his self-will on the most vital point? It is like a beggar inheriting the bag of gold, thinking himself too weak to own it. I want to manifest my self-will. I may be the only one, but I'll do it. I am bound to shoot myself because the highest point of my self-will is to kill myself by my own hands.'

And he kills himself, actually with the object of manifesting his 'non-obedience,' his 'new, terrible liberty.' His voluntary self-destruction gave him the complete illusion of his own highest self-assertion. And that was what he was craving for. . . . Of course, there is no certainty that with suicide one really destroys one's consciousness for ever. For, quite unexpectedly, the latter may emerge again on a different plane of existence which is perhaps even more senseless, dull, and unacceptable than the world it has left. Or as Svidrigailov

Dostoevsky and his Creation

says, rather figuratively (and, in his own way, quite logically): 'Men always represent eternity as an incomprehensible idea, as something immense—immense! But why would this necessarily be the case? Imagine, on the contrary, a small room—a bathroom if you will—blackened by smoke, with spiders in every corner. Supposing that to be eternity. I often conceive it to be so. . . .'

Well, if this be so, then there remains nothing but the eternal protest of the insulted individual against the eternal 'mockery.'

III

True, God-strugglers may often rebel against God, not only for their own sake, but also from a Promethean impulse, that is to say, from love of humanity and in the name of humanity.

'I must have justice, or I will destroy myself. And not justice in some remote time and space, but here on earth and that I could see myself,' claims Ivan Karamazov, resolutely refusing to sing *hosanna* to a God in whom he sees neither Justice nor Value for mankind.

But a 'cosmic mutiny' is also possible

‘ Cosmic Mutiny ’

exclusively *for one's own sake*: the individual desires to take revenge only for his personal tragedy—to take revenge on God, on His world, on mankind, on everybody, on everything. In this case the God-struggler becomes a Satanist. The former type wishes to receive a justification for the suffering of the last tortured creature, while the Satanist is ready to torture all God's creatures, if only he may strengthen and emphasise by this means his personal rebellion against God, who is the supposed cause and the witness of his shame. The Satanist is usually a spiritual Sadist, and the more he feels his own nothingness, weakness, and eternal degradation, the more hysterical become his spiritual sadism, his daring and cynicism. The essence of his enjoyment consists in the conscious despising of everything sacred, and this often pushed to the utmost point of human imagination. The greatest blasphemies, the most reckless sacrileges and crimes, the lowest depravity (derived not from physiological, but from spiritual, from ‘moral’ sensuality), as well as the everlasting consciousness of struggling against God, of being a castaway for all eternity not through God's will, but through *self-will*—all this may become the source of satanic pride and an inconceivable perverse spiritual enjoyment. The

Dostoevsky and his Creation

mediæval witches' Sabbath, distinguished by grossly sacrilegious rites, is typical in this respect, and it is rooted in a much profounder subliminal impulse of man's consciousness than is generally realised.

The Satanist is thus a virtual destroyer of all existing values. He is directly obsessed by his self-will, obsessed by an inner, *moral* necessity to destroy everything, including God. To return to 'normal' conditions, to peace and to happiness, is for him an organic impossibility, since to do this would be an offence against the majesty of 'unavenged suffering' which is necessary to him as the only evidence of his greatness and the main justification for his mutiny against God and His world.

'Oh, there are some who remain proud and fierce even in hell, in spite of their certain knowledge and contemplation of absolute truth; there are some fearful ones who have given themselves over to Satan and to his proud spirit entirely. For such, hell is voluntary and ever consuming; they are tortured by their own choice. For they have cursed themselves, cursing God and life. They live upon their vindictive pride like a starving man in the desert sucking blood out of his own body. But they are never satisfied, they refuse forgiveness, they curse

‘ Cosmic Mutiny ’

God who calls them, ‘ They cannot behold the living God without hatred, and they cry out that the God of life should destroy Himself and His own creation. And they will burn in the fire of their own wrath for ever. . . . ’

Thus wrote Father Zossima (*Brothers Karamazov*), guessing that a mutiny in the name of Satan is not only possible, but even very tempting, in so far as it gives an illusion of spiritual titanism and of one’s highest individual self-assertion.

IV

The more organic and intense this mutiny, the more inverted become all moral instincts and values. The craving for protest, revenge, and suffering expands into a craving for evil, for all that is abnormal and ugly. Each value becomes *d-rebours*—although in this case not as a consequence of the so-called æsthetic longing for ‘ new emotions,’ as in the famous *Dorian Gray* or in Huysmans’s hero, Mr des Esseintes. A point is even possible at which the sub-conscious magical impulse attains a complete preponderance over the super-conscious element. In such a case we get a fact of extreme importance: the famous Categorical Imperative

Dostoevsky and his Creation

of Kant receives an *inverted* direction—it is transformed into the imperative for evil.

So we reach the connecting point between the Satanist and the Transcendental Criminal.¹ For there is no longer any doubt that such criminals exist, quite apart from any influence of *milieu* or social circumstances. The individual with a complete preponderance of the subconscious over the super-conscious element is fated to become a criminal even as a man with a preponderance of the super-conscious element is developing towards the opposite pole—in the direction of saintliness. A man who is an evil-doer by such inner, subconscious, impulses is a transcendental criminal; he may be defined as an unconscious Satanist, while the Satanist becomes a conscious transcendental criminal.

In both of them the Categorical Imperative is inverted; good they construe as evil, evil as good. So-called repentance is therefore unknown and inaccessible to them. Dostoevsky, from whom criminology has a good deal to learn in this respect, acknowledges in his *House of Death* that among his fellow-convicts in Siberia he had known 'murderers who were so gay and free from care that one might have made a bet

¹ The term 'T. C.' was first used (in so far as I know) by Otto Weininger.

'Cosmic Mutiny'

that their conscience never made them the least reproach.' Among them there was a certain Orlov in whom we see undoubtedly many features peculiar to transcendental criminals. 'He was a malefactor of a rare kind,' writes Dostoevsky, 'capable of assassinating in cold blood old men and children. He possessed an indomitable force of will, and was fully conscious of his power. When he understood that I was endeavouring to see through him, and to discover in him some trace of repentance, he looked at me with a haughty and contemptuous air, as if I were a foolish little boy, to whom he did too much honour by conversing with him. I detected in his countenance a sort of compassion for me. After a moment's pause he laughed out loud, but without the least irony. I fancy he must, more than once, have laughed in the same manner, when my words returned to his memory. In reality he must have despised me, for I was a feeble being, contemptible in all respects, and guilty above all of resignation. . . .'

Every transcendental criminal would behave in a similar manner.

Let us mention by the way that the so-called 'demoniacal' characters are often nothing but disguised transcendental criminals. Sometimes they become great murderers (not by external or

Dostoevsky and his Creation

social, but by inner, subconscious impulses); sometimes great conquerors, great reformers, or even great artists (for instance, Villon, Cellini, Paganini, Verlaine, probably also Goya, etc.). The latter is, however, more liable to happen in cases where, parallel with the 'magical' tendency, there exists an equally active opposite impulse, struggling with it. This we see in Dostoevsky, who rebelled against God in the name of Satan, and against Satan in the name of God at one and the same time. On the other hand, his greatest load arose not only from this double inner struggle, but also from the fact that he, as a 'child of unfaith' could not believe fully either in God or in Satan, against both of whom he strove, nevertheless, even to his last moment.

VI

THE WRESTLE WITH THE VOID

I

THE Promethean mutiny and the Satanic struggle against God may offer the illusion of the highest individual self-assertion. They impose, however, two difficult conditions: a permanent inner tension and a complete belief in God. The strength of a God-struggler consists in his belief in God; his weakness and danger in his doubt of Him. For, as soon as he becomes conscious that God does not exist, his rebellious will loses the object against which it needs to strive. Against 'unconscious blind forces' he cannot fight for the simple reason that they are unconscious, that is to say, irresponsible, and, therefore, not guilty. Consequently, his former struggle against God becomes a wrestle with the void—with that aimless cosmic void which negates any real assertion of life and individuality. Hence a God-struggler is and must of necessity be religious. His passionate

Dostoevsky and his Creation

repudiation of God is of a religious character, and it has nothing in common with the negation of those 'scientific' atheists whose consciousness never rises to the terrible problem of God.

There exists, however, still another type of atheist—an atheist who is seeking and craving for God, but, owing to the peculiar constitution of his mind, cannot find Him. He suffers beneath the burden of the cosmic void, quite realising that, without God, life and universe are meaningless, and at the same time God is hidden from him for ever. Such a tragic atheist may take subterfuge in all possible casual aims and values, but they are rarely of any avail; no casual aim is strong enough to overcome that emptiness which faces him continually, crushing his soul and sapping his strength. As his craving for self-assertion finds nothing but futility, it eventually turns against itself; man falls beneath the burden of his own will and strength.

Thus perished Nikolay Stavrogin, the perplexed hero of *The Possessed*.

The Wrestle with the Void

II

Stavrogin is one of the most enigmatic figures created by Dostoevsky's genius. His fate is the fate of the strength which destroys itself in consequence of failing to discover the way to a higher synthetic expression. His sceptical intellect, and also his inner cleavage into two opposing 'truths' (which paralyse the possibility of one single Truth), form the insurmountable barrier between his consciousness and God. The path to the Absolute Value is thus closed to him; on the other hand, he is fully aware that all values and aims outside of it are nothing but illusions.

His former adherents, Shatov and Kirillov, were able to find satisfaction in such illusions. But Stavrogin's consciousness has gone further; where his disciples had found a Value, he saw but a masked void. And this void he either must abolish or be engulfed by. The first course is impossible to him, while the second is intolerable. There remains, consequently, only a constant unsuccessful flight from the void. And that is how Stavrogin acts. In his *horror vacui* he grasps simultaneously at the most contradictory means and values—trying to

Dostoevsky and his Creation

discover which of them is best able to subdue him and to provide at least an illusory aim for his longing will.

Having no confidence in his own 'ideas,' he endeavours to persuade others to believe in them—with the dim hope that he may become infected by the ardent belief of his adherents. But in vain. While Shatov and Kirillov stick fanatically to two of his completely opposite principles (those of Man-God and of God-Man), his own soul remains in the same barren despair as before.

'It was a teacher uttering weighty words, and a pupil who was raised from the dead,' Shatov remarked some years later, adding significantly: 'Perhaps during those very days you were infecting the heart of that hapless creature, that maniac Kirillov with poison. . . . You confirmed malignant ideas in him, and brought him to the verge of insanity.'

'I was not deceiving either of you. I was not deceiving you then; in persuading you I was perhaps more concerned with myself than with you,' Stavrogin pronounced enigmatically.

And here a short dialogue took place, characteristic of both of them.

Shatov began a passionate tirade, going over all the former convictions of Stavrogin.

The Wrestle with the Void

'I assure you,' answered Stavrogin, 'that I should be very glad to confirm all that you said just now, every syllable of it, but——'

'But you want a hare? . . . Your own nasty expression.' Shatov laughed spitefully. . . .

'To cook your hare you must first catch it; to believe in God you must first have a God. . . .'

'Tell me, have you caught your hare?'

'Don't dare to ask me in such words! Ask differently!'

'Certainly, I'll ask you differently. I only want to know, do you believe in God yourself?'

'I believe in Russia. . . . I believe in her orthodoxy. . . . I believe that the new advent will take place in Russia. . . . I believe——'

'And in God? In God?'

'I—I *will* believe in God.'

'Not one muscle moved in Stavrogin's face. Shatov looked passionately and defiantly at him, as though he would have scorched him with his eyes.'

Thus in a few words each of them revealed his inner drama. 'The God-seeker Shatov knew perfectly well why he uttered his violent reproaches, looking at Stavrogin 'as though he would have scorched him with his eyes.' And Stavrogin knew it too. The difference between them was that he at that time had already tested

Dostoevsky and his Creation

the whole 'series of deceptions,' while Shatov was still convulsively clutching at one of them—in his terror that he might lose it and fall into the hopeless void of Nikolay Stavrogin.

But let us pass to Stavrogin's 'series of deceptions.'

III

Besides the philosophical and idealogical illusions in which he found—despite the ardour of his followers—merely the 'old common-places, the same from the beginning of time,' Stavrogin plunged, most of all, into sensual deceptions. He tried to discover whether his sensual desires would be enough to 'guide' him.

He indulged in vices—although he was neither vicious nor sensual. (In his last letter he owns himself, 'I have tried the depths of debauchery and wasted my strength over it. But I don't like vice, and I did not want it.') Moreover, for the very reason that he was not sensual at all, he walked with such a frenzy after the flesh. He tried the utmost limits of sensuality from a desire to *become* sensual and to abolish by depravity, as well as by hoped for

The Wrestle with the Void

moral rackings and lacerations, his dominant feeling—the dread of the cosmic void. But his debaucheries proved as unsuccessful in this respect as his senseless secret marriage with the crippled and half-witted Marya Timofeyevna. In other words, sensuality was not his nature, but a shelter from himself. And the less sensual he was by nature, the more he endeavoured to become so by cold and deliberate depravity.

‘Is it true that when you were in Petersburg you belonged to a secret society for practising beastly sensuality?’ shouted Shatov during his midnight talk with him. ‘Is it true that you could give lessons to the Marquis de Sade? Is it true that you decoyed and corrupted children? Is it true that you declared that you saw no distinction in beauty between some brutal obscene action and any great exploit, even the sacrifice of life for the good of humanity? . . . I don’t know either why evil is hateful and good is beautiful, but I know why the sense of that distinction is effaced and lost in people like Stavrogins! . . . Do you know why you made that base and shameful marriage? Simply because the shame and senselessness of it reached a pitch of genius! You married from a passion for martyrdom, from a craving for remorse,

Dostoevsky and his Creation

through moral sensuality. It was a lacerating of the nerves. Defiance of common sense was too tempting. Stavrogin and a wretched half-witted, crippled beggar !'

'You are a psychologist,' said Stavrogin, turning paler and paler, 'though you are partly mistaken as to the reason of my marriage. . . .'

And Shatov was indeed mistaken as to the ultimate reason of Stavrogin's sensuality and defiance of common sense. In his spite he forgot that Stavrogin craved for self-lacerations neither for the sake of 'nerves' nor for the sake of a tragic pose, but in order to lift, if only for a moment, the oppression of absolute aimlessness and void. .

Disappointed in his depravities, Stavrogin mingled with the Nihilists, buoyed up by the glamour of their aims and aspirations. He mixed with the 'possessed' in the hope of becoming 'possessed' himself. But here too he failed. 'Do you know that I looked upon our iconoclasts with spite, from envy of their hopes ?' he wrote to Darya Pavlovna. 'But you had no need to be afraid. I could not be of them, for I never shared anything with them. And to do it for fun, from spite, I could not either, not because I am afraid of the ridiculous—I cannot be afraid of the ridiculous—but

*The Wrestle with the Void**

because I have, after all, the habits of a gentleman and it disgusted me. But if I had felt more spite and envy of them, I might perhaps have joined them. You can judge how hard it has been for me, and how I have struggled from one thing to another.'

After this he adopted a new deception—strength for strength's sake. He tried to intoxicate himself with his own 'immense power.' He really maintained a superhuman composure while enduring a public insult from Shatov. With the greatest coolness he openly announced his 'shameful' marriage; he faced Gaganov's pistol with a complete indifference—but all to no real purpose. Nothing could mask or eliminate his heavy load. For such a task his powers, his desires and feelings were 'too petty, never very strong.'

'I have tried my strength everywhere,' he writes. 'As long as I was experimenting for myself and for others it seemed infinite, as it has all my life. But to what to apply my strength, that is what I have never seen, and do not see now. My desires are too weak; they are not enough to guide me.' And again: 'One may argue about everything endlessly, but from me nothing has come but negation, with no greatness of soul, no force. Even negation has not come

Dostoevsky and his Creation

from me. Everything has always been petty and spiritless.'

His void was stronger than his will. His feeling of aimlessness was more intense than all his casual aims. And this void was now absorbing more and more his will, his strength and soul. There remained only one last attempt to find a temporary shelter from it: the woman from whom Stavrogin hoped for a love so strong and beautiful that it could 'at last set up some aim' for him. But this attempt failed as miserably as all his previous endeavours. From the fascinating Liza, who ran from her betrothed to Stavrogin, we learn that, instead of the expected miracle, there arose a new deception—a deception on both sides.

'I knew I did not love you, and I ruined you,' Stavrogin said to Liza on the fatal morning after the strange night he had spent with her. 'Yes, I accepted the moment for my own; I had a hope. . . . I've had it a long time . . . my last hope. . . . I could not resist the radiance that flooded my heart when you came in to me yesterday of yourself, alone, of your own accord. I suddenly believed . . . perhaps I have faith in it still. . . .'

'I won't be your nurse, though, of course, you need one as much as any crippled creature.

*The Wrestle with the Void**

I always fancied that you would take me to some place where there was a huge wicked spider, big as a man, and we should spend our lives looking at it and being afraid of it. That's how our love would spend itself,' answered the disillusioned Liza before leaving him for ever.

The great and endless void thus grew and gazed at him, leering from all sides. And the void was the only thing that did not deceive him. All the rest was mere petty and shameful delusion. Even the most radical protest against the void—suicide—seemed to him a deception. 'I know I ought to kill myself, to brush myself off the earth like a nasty insect; but I am afraid of showing greatness of soul. I know that it will be another shame again—the last deception in an endless series of deceptions,' he writes in his last letter, filled with that desperate weakness which is known only to really strong men.

Finally, he was left with one dilemma; either to face and bear his load, or to escape from it by his last deception—by suicide. For some time he still hoped he could perhaps face it. For that purpose he begged his 'nurse,' Darya Pavlovna, to go with him to Canton Uri in Switzerland, where he had bought a house. . . .

Dostoevsky and his Creation

'It is a very dull place, a narrow valley, the mountains restrict both vision and thought. It is very gloomy. . . .' But at the last moment he chose the second issue: he hanged himself. He 'brushed himself off the earth like a nasty insect.'

IV

Either an Absolute Value or an absolute void!

There is hardly a middle-way for a profound, uncompromising consciousness. Logically and 'scientifically' we may well exclude God and substitute the principle of self-will, effacing the distinction between good and evil; our truest self, however, will strive against such an exclusion, perceiving beforehand all its results.

On one occasion the Nihilist Verhovensky, in a jesting tone, related to Stavrogin how, during a discussion upon atheism, 'one grizzled old stager of a captain sat mum, not saying a word. All at once he stands up in the middle of the room, and says aloud, as though speaking to himself: "If there is no God, how can I be a captain then?" He took up his cap and went out, flinging up his hands.'

The Wrestle with the Void

‘ I didn’t understand it, I meant to ask you about it,’ added Verhovensky.

‘ He expressed a rather sensible idea,’ answered Stavrogin. And in fact, he knew only too well what a sensible idea the old stager of a captain expressed.

From the beginning, rebellious man has endeavoured to kill God in the hope of procuring by His death an absolute freedom.

In Dostoevsky’s Stavrogin, we can see that ‘ killing ’ God results not in absolute freedom, but in absolute void.

VII

THE BANKRUPTCY OF 'SUPERMAN'

I

THE drama of Rodion Raskolnikov is closely connected with the chief problem of Dostoevsky, the problem of Value. A short analysis of Raskolnikov's 'crime and punishment' may, moreover, partly explain why the two greatest modern transvaluers, Dostoevsky and Nietzsche, arrived at precisely opposite conceptions of highest individual self-assertion; for it is Raskolnikov who presents in many respects the psychological bankruptcy of the very basis (*i.e.*, the basis of self-will) on which Nietzsche founded the superman.

A clear idea of Raskolnikov's mentality before his fatal deed may be obtained from his theory of crime (set down in an article written by him long before the murder). According to that theory, mankind is naturally divided into two categories, an inferior and a superior. To the former belong the conservative majority who

The Bankruptcy of 'Superman'

live and must live in everlasting obedience, being incapable of living otherwise; while in the latter are but the exceptional men—the daring, commanding and even criminal creators of new values. The true driving-powers of life, great legislators, teachers, and benefactors of humanity, are found only in the second category; and they ruthlessly destroy the old order and break the 'sacred' laws, faithfully observed by the community, never hesitating to sacrifice innumerable lives in the furthering of their cause. 'Not only all great men, but also all those who, by hook or by crook, have raised themselves above the common herd, men who are capable of evolving something new, must, in virtue of their innate power, be undoubtedly more or less criminals,' explains Raskolnikov to the judge Porfiry, granting them a logical and even a moral sanction for shedding blood, if this be necessary for their creative purpose.

'I am grieved to observe that the only original idea you adduce, is a *moral* right to shed blood—this opinion I find you support, even defend, with fanaticism. Moral licence or authority to kill is, to my mind, even more terrible than official legal authority to the same effect,' observed his friend Razumihin.

Dostoevsky and his Creation

So in theory Raskolnikov insists on the principle of self-will or will to power, based on 'natural selection.' He has himself been injured and rejected by life, just as the hero of the *Underworld*; yet unlike the latter, he wants to assert himself through an active protest and to join by any means, even by crime, his second, 'superhuman' category. His logic, or better still, his 'science and reason,' afforded him a complete sanction to overstep the conventional moral law in the name of his own individual law. Nevertheless, he wavered; he was constantly divided and split into two selves, albeit this cleavage took place, for the most part, on the subliminal plane. The dramatic antagonism between these two impulses has been vividly demonstrated by the great novelist. After having resolved to murder the old pawnbroker-woman, Raskolnikov dreams, for instance, a hideous symbolic dream in which drunken peasants beat to death a miserable old horse, and he awakes in shuddering horror at the mere contemplation of his criminal design.

'O, God! Am I to stand beating in her skull, to wade in warm blood, break open the lock and rob and tremble, blood flowing all around, and hide myself with the hatchet? O, God! is this indeed possible? What am I thinking of?

The Bankruptcy of 'Superman'

I know well I could not endure that with which I have been torturing myself. I saw clearly yesterday as I went up the stairs how disgusting and mean and low it all was, and did I not run away in terror ?'

He went out with burning eyes and shaking limbs, but he breathed more easily. Instead of the old oppression, he now felt peace and light. 'Lord, show me the way, that I may renounce these horrid thoughts of mine.' . . . As he gazed on the Neva and on the clear, red sunset, all his weakness vanished, the heavy load was lifted from his heart. 'Liberty! Liberty!' For the moment he was free from bedevilment. Yet, but a few steps farther he chanced to hear that the old woman would be alone in her home at a certain hour, and suddenly—he 'felt that now all liberty of action and free-will had gone, and everything was irrevocably decided.' In spite of his dread, he was driven into crime, like a mere tool of Fate. 'Going over all that happened to him during those days, minute by minute and step by step, he recalled later how each event always seemed to him evidence of the predetermination of his fate.'

As one in delirium, he murdered the 'old vermin,' together with her gentle, half-witted

Dostoevsky and his Creation

sister. And here begins the second act of his inner drama.

II

After his crime a strange reaction began in Raskolnikov's soul. Although he had killed two human beings, he felt no remorse at all. Instead of remorse he experienced something quite different and unexpected. It seemed 'as if a haze had fallen upon him, and wrapped him in an impenetrable and gloomy solitude. If it were possible to go at once into perfect solitude even for life, he would have felt happy; however, that was impossible, for, although he was almost always alone, in reality he could never feel so. Strange to say, the more solitary the place the more Raskolnikov felt haunted by an invisible presence, which did not so much terrify as irritate him. Then he hastened back to life again, mixing with the crowd, frequenting the cafés and dramshops.'

The reaction thus commenced below the level of his consciousness. Before the crime, there was a full accordance between his 'rebellious' impulse and his logic, which sanctioned his deed. But immediately after

The Bankruptcy of 'Superman'

the crime, the logical truth proved unacceptable to his super-conscious self, which now took the upper hand—remaining all the while in the subliminal area. Raskolnikov was tortured by this subliminal discord, and, in the meantime, he was not able to comprehend it logically and consciously. This explains the strange psychological paradox of his being tormented by the committed crime without experiencing *consciously* the slightest feeling of remorse. His 'double' crushed him, so to speak, from behind—by means of his very logic.

As we know, he had obtained the logical sanction to murder only the spiteful 'old vermin,' and not her harmless sister Elizabeth. He probably was prepared to face and overcome any remorse for his deed, but quite unexpectedly he experienced no remorse either for the first or for the second murder. However, if there is no conscious reaction from a real crime, then there is no crime at all; if there is no crime, then there is no law, no good and evil, no real 'principle,' no Value. In such a case his own 'superhuman' law was as fictitious as the law against which he had protested in the name of his 'will to power.'

This discovery startled Raskolnikov. It was

Dostoevsky and his Creation

as if the ground had suddenly been cut from under his feet. He felt that he had murdered not the woman, but the 'principle.' He was poised in the air confronting that void which was so familiar to Nikolay Stavrogin. This void of self-will with its complete absence of any moral value proved to his consciousness far more oppressive than all the previous conventional moral laws and fetters. And how could the wavering Raskolnikov sustain such a burden, if even so strong a man as Stavrogin was too weak for it?

Raskolnikov fled terror-stricken at the very first glance upon it, into the shelter of his logic and reason—only to find the burden still more insupportable. The complete justification of his deed by logic only widened the cleavage between his conscious self and the super-conscious impulse whose subliminal reaction increased step by step, until the very absence of conscious inner torment became Raskolnikov's greatest torment. As his inner agony was caused not by some eternal justice and law; but by the apparent silence of such a Law and Justice, he naturally hungered to experience the fiercest remorse, or to get at least a single evidence that his crime was a real crime, but in vain. He dared to triumph over himself, but being too

The Bankruptcy of 'Superman'

weak for such a task, he paid a terrible price for his daring.

'If only need had urged me to commit murder I would now be happy. . . . I can assure you of that,' he complains to the gentle Sonia. 'What was the use of this foolish triumph over myself? . . . You begin again to weep and to embrace me. Why do you that at all? Because lacking courage to bear my own burden I have imposed it on another, because in anguish of others I look for some mitigation of my own. And you can love a coward like me?'

'I ought to have known that,' he thought with a bitter smile. 'How did I dare, knowing what I am, anticipating what would happen, how did I dare take an axe and shed blood? I must have known everything beforehand. Indeed, I did know it. . . . As for the old woman, she is of no account! She has always been an incident. It was not a human being, it was a principle I destroyed. The principle I have destroyed, but I could not step over it. . . . I am absolutely so much vermin because I am probably more vile and more ignoble than the vermin that has been destroyed, and because I felt certain that after my deed I should say so! Can there be anything like my terror? Oh! platitude! platitude! I can now realise the

Dostoevsky and his Creation

Prophet on horseback, scimitar in hand! Allah wills it!—therefore obey, trembling creature! The Prophet was right when, marshalling some picked troops in the open, he struck down the good and bad, without even deigning an explanation! Obey, trembling creature, and remember you have no will, because the matter at issue does not concern you! I shall never, never forgive the old woman!

In his vain effort to elude the moral *horror vacui* he goes to the innocent prostitute, Sonia, with the deliberate intention of confessing everything and sharing with her his inner load. Shuddering at her tears he kisses her feet and, at the same time, he significantly asks her to read him the story of the resurrection of Lazarus. . . . The bankrupt 'superman' listens to Sonia's simple and naive utterances, cherishing the hope that by her 'principles' he may perhaps be raised from moral death like Lazarus from the tomb. Finally, in spite of logic, and without knowing why, he decides to hand himself over to the Justice and to go to the galley. Yet still he remains in his void, which separates him for ever from Earth and mankind, from all living beings, even from his mother and sister. And in his great desperation he hears no other answer than the

The Bankruptcy of 'Superman'

whimsical laughter of his *alter ego* Svidrigailov, who is but the ghastly, 'superhuman' embodiment of his final logical conclusions.

Thus it was not Raskolnikov who destroyed the old woman; he himself was destroyed by her. 'I shall never, never forgive the old woman! . . .' He even wanted to murder her again, just to take revenge on her. And he really tried to achieve this desire, at least in a dream: he 'softly took the axe from the noose, and struck her skull blow on blow. Strange: she did not stir, as though she were of wood. He bent down, tried to look at her, but she also bent lower and lower. He then stooped, nearly to the ground, looked up and, peeping in her face, turned cold with horror: the woman sat and laughed, rocking with silent laughter. Suddenly he realised that the door of the bedroom had opened, and there, too, were sounds of laughter and whispering. Overcome with rage, with all his force he struck and struck again. Yet the laughter and whispering got louder and louder, and as to the old woman—she simply shook with laughter.'

Her laughter is the laughter of the 'beyond good and evil' at the daring 'superman' who falls into the net of his own self-will and cannot find a way out of it.

Dostoevsky and his Creation

III

In his search for an escape Raskolnikov handed himself over to Justice—without being conscious of any crime. For even after having voluntarily decided to give himself up and to confess his murder he exclaims: 'Is it a crime to have killed some vile and noisome vermin, an old usurer, a vampire living on the life of the poor? Why, murders of that kind ought to make up for many a crime! I do not even give it a thought! As for atonement—bah! Why should every one hiss out to me the words "Crime, crime!" Now that I am determined of my own free will to face dishonour, the absurdity of such a resolution strikes me more than ever! It is only weakness and puerility that is leading me to take that step.'

But there was something beyond mere weakness in that step; it was the half-conscious longing to recover, cost what it might, the 'destroyed principle' which could save him from his void and restore him to life. With the vague hope that this might be achieved by voluntary suffering, he went to Siberia. There, in prison, he craved for tears, for the fiercest inner torments and remorse, but without avail. Had destiny only

The Bankruptcy of 'Superman.'

allowed him to repent, had it granted him 'the burning regret which crushes the heart and drives away sleep, repentance whose torments drive to the noose or river—oh, he would have rejoiced. Sorrow, tears, that would be life. But he did not repent of his deed. . . .'

It was in the solitude of his prison that he went over his crime again. He pondered on it, and his 'logic and reason' were more than ever prepared to justify it. Consciously, he still felt no guilt at all. 'How,' he argued, 'were my thoughts more stupid than other thoughts or ideas which have existed since the world was made? It is only necessary to look upon the deed from a broad view, without prejudice. . . . My idea will then not appear so strange. Oh, you twopenny-halfpenny philosophers and wise men! Why do you stop half-way? And why does my behaviour appear so guilty? Because it is a crime? What does the word crime mean? My conscience is easy. I certainly broke the letter of the law, and shed blood. Well, let the letter of the law take my head, that's all. Undoubtedly, many benefactors of humanity, who have not inherited power, but have attained to it, should have been punished for their very first steps; but these people prevailed, and are justified, whilst I have not known how to shape

, Dostoevsky and his Creation

my steps; consequently, I was wrong in making the attempt.'

Thus he deliberated, while craving for that repentance 'whose torments drive to the noose or river.' The cleavage between his conscious reason and his super-conscious double remained the same as before. His rational and his subliminal irrational truths proved to be exactly opposite, irreconcilable, and even without any point of contact. As long as his 'super-human' self-will was concerned merely with logic, he was able to hold his 'daring' convictions and ideas without any inner conflict or harm. But after the very first practical experience Raskolnikov ran—in spite of all previous theoretical sanctions—to the galley of Siberia, anxious to recover even the old moral values, the values of the disgraced Sonia rather than to be engulfed by the impending void; for there are cases when the feeling of guiltlessness proves infinitely more oppressive than any feeling of guilt.

In short, Raskolnikov typifies not the logical (or ideological), but the psychological *fiasco* of the so-called 'superman.'

The Bankruptcy of 'Superman'

IV

The principle of self-will (or of 'will to power') proved untenable as the basis of life. Its individual consequences Dostoevsky demonstrated in the personal drama of Raskolnikov, and the social prospects he envisaged in Raskolnikov's delirious dream in the hospital in Siberia.

In that dream the hero of the *Crime and Punishment* saw the whole world 'desolated by an unknown plague, which, coming from the interior of Asia, spread over all countries. Parasites of a new character, microscopical beings, fixed their home in the human body. But these animalculæ were breathing creatures, endowed with intellect and will. Persons affected became immediately mad. But, strange to say, the stricken were, at the same time, imbued with a strong sense of their own good judgment; never did they think themselves so strongly endowed with wisdom and intellectual vigour or scientific conclusions and moral perceptions so correct as now. Whole villages and towns, the entire populations became tainted, and lost their reason. They were incapable of understanding each other, because each believed himself the sole possessor of truth. They

Dostoevsky and his Creation

could not agree upon any point, knew not what to consider evil, what good, and they fell upon one another in anger and killed. In towns the alarm was great, meetings were called, but for what and by whom none knew. The commonest trade was abandoned, because everybody had his own ideas as to the mode of pursuing it, but no two agreed. People gathered together in crowds, agreed upon a common action, swearing never to abandon one another, then immediately rushed to something else, forgot their agreement and ended in murdering each other. Everything perished. The pestilence raged more and more. . . .'

Who does not recognise in this pestilence the moral results of self-will with its 'all things are lawful'? According to Dostoevsky not only the personality, but life itself is fated to perish, if built on such a basis. The line between the superman and superbeast would eventually become completely obliterated, in spite of all science and reason; for 'reason had never power to define good and evil, or to distinguish between them even approximately; on the contrary, it has always mixed them up in a disgraceful and pitiful way; science has even given the solution by the fist.'

Consequently, life has and must have another,

The Bankruptcy of 'Superman'

deeper, basis. As Shatov states, 'science and reason have from the beginning of time played a secondary and subordinate part in the life of nations. Nations are built up and moved by another force which sways and dominates them, the origin of which is unknown and inexplicable.'

In Raskolnikov, as well as in some other characters, Dostoevsky showed that single personalities, too, are moved, not only by science and reason, but also by another irrational force which 'sways and dominates them, the origin of which is unknown and inexplicable.'

Shatov called this force the 'spirit of life' and defined it as a search for God. We may define it as the longing for an absolute self-assertion, or as the eternal search for an Absolute Value.

VIII

THE 'TWO TRUTHS'

(THE DILEMMA OF IVAN KARAMAZOV)

I

THE hero through whom Dostoevsky voiced some of his most intimate secrets undoubtedly is Ivan Karamazov. He has many characteristics in common with Raskolnikov and Stavrogin for the simple reason that he presents a new aspect of the same inner drama. Raskolnikov fled in horror from the void of 'beyond good and evil'; Stavrogin tried to escape, but in vain; Ivan Karamazov, however, was poised on that narrow and dreadful ridge which separates the absolute void from the possibility of an Absolute Value, being thus compelled, like Dostoevsky himself, to contemplate at one and the same moment the greatest depths of belief and unbelief.

Stavrogin's tragedy was that he could not be a believer; the tragedy of Ivan was that he could be neither a believer nor an unbeliever. In

The 'Two Truths' ,

Stavrogin we see a superhuman will which cannot envisage a real aim, and therefore turns against itself; in Ivan, on the other hand, we mark a consuming thirst for life which undermines life itself—being incapable of finding its true assertion. Before life Ivan demands the meaning of life; at the same time his brooding and destructive intellect constantly bars the way to either. Yet still he lives. 'I have a longing for life and I go on living *in spite of logic*,' he says to his brother Alyosha. 'I have asked myself many times whether there is in the world any despair that would overcome this frantic and perhaps unseemly thirst for life in me, and I have come to the conclusion that there is not. Though I may not believe in the order of the universe, yet I love the sticky little leaves as they open in spring. I love the blue sky. . . . It is not a matter of intellect or logic, it is loving with one's inside, with one's stomach.'

This perpetual contest between his logic and his 'inside' forms the conscious cleavage of his personality; but apart from this self-division, his inner Ego itself is split into two antagonistic impulses, each with its own 'independent will.' Burning with the desire to sing hosanna, he is thus compelled to 'rebel'; craving for life, he is forced to reject it—until its senseless pain

Dostoevsky and his Creation

and suffering shall be fully justified, and their significance unravelled. He makes, in fact, a desperate attempt to unriddle them, but all his efforts are futile; for in his emphatic search after the highest justification of life, he never could overstep the chief stumbling-block—the mystery of good and evil, *i.e.*, the problem of Value. His will and mind were shattered on it, breaking against the insoluble antinomy of the ‘two truths’: the truth of self-will (‘all things are lawful’) and the possibility of the *other* truth, which so far is neither guaranteed nor revealed.

Let us analyse some phases of this inner struggle.

II

Unlike Stavrogin, Ivan Karamazov admits the existence of God. He admits this *a priori*, realising that such a problem is beyond his ‘pitiful Euclidian understanding.’ And yet, while admitting this, he consciously repudiates God, for he cannot bring himself to recognise Him as a Value.

If we accept God, then we must accept His whole creation with all its suffering, injustice,

The 'Two Truths'

and evil. But how is it possible to reconcile logically the universal injustice and mockery of life with the conception of a wise and just God? This old barrier between God and Value is raised by Ivan in such a way that it becomes to him insurmountable.

'Imagine that you are creating a fabric of human destiny with the object of making men happy in the end, giving them peace and rest at last, but that it was essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature—that baby beating its breast with its fist—and to found the edifice on its unavenged tears, would you consent to be the architect on those conditions?' he asks his brother Alyosha.

'No, I would not consent,' answers Alyosha.

'I say nothing of the suffering of the grown up people,' Ivan continues. 'They have eaten their apple, damn them all! But the little ones! Without suffering, I am told, man could not have existed on earth, for he could not know good and evil. Why should he know that diabolical good and evil when it costs so much? The whole world of knowledge is not worth a child's suffering. What comfort is it to me that there are none guilty and that cause follows

Dostoevsky and his Creation

effect simply and directly, and that I know it—I must have justice, or I will destroy myself. And not justice in some remote infinite time and space, but here on earth, and that I could see myself. I want to see it, and if I am dead by then, let me rise again, for if it all happens without me it will be too unfair. Surely I haven't suffered simply that I, my crimes and sufferings, may manure the soil of the future harmony for somebody else. I want to see with my own eyes the hind lie down with the lion, and the victim rise up and embrace his murderer. I want to be there when every one suddenly understands what it has all been for. All the religions of the world are built on this longing, and I am a believer.'

After having described some most painful concrete cases of tortures perpetrated on the innocent 'little ones,' Ivan raises the question of their senseless suffering. He raises this question simply because in the case of children it is unanswerable—in so far as 'retribution' is and must be excluded, since they are guilty of no sins. 'If all must suffer for the eternal harmony, what have children to do with it? It's beyond all comprehension why they should suffer, and why they should pay for the harmony. Why should they too furnish material

The 'Two Truths'

to enrich the soil for the harmony of the future ? And if it is really true that they must share responsibility for their fathers' crimes, such a truth is not of this world and is beyond my comprehension.'

As he cannot accept any supernatural explanation and solace, he is bound to protest against all undeserved suffering; and if such suffering is necessary as a price for some higher truth to be revealed in the future, he is prepared to reject even truth itself, for 'the truth is not worth such a price. I don't want the mother to embrace the oppressor who threw her son to the dogs! She dare not forgive him! Let her forgive him for herself, if she will, let her forgive the torturer for the immeasurable suffering of her mother's heart. But the sufferings of her tortured child she has no right to forgive; she dare not forgive the torturer, even if the child were to forgive him. And if that is so, if they dare not forgive, what becomes of harmony ? Is there in the whole world a being who would have the right to forgive and could forgive ? I don't want harmony. From love of humanity I don't want it. I would rather be left with my unavenged suffering and unsatisfied indignation, *even if I were wrong*. Besides, too high a price is asked for harmony; it is beyond our means

Dostoevsky and his Creation

to pay so much to enter on it. And so I hasten to give back my entrance ticket, and if I am an honest man I am bound to give it back as soon as possible. And that I am doing. It is not God that I don't accept, only I most respectfully return Him the ticket. . . .'

'“That is rebellion,” murmured Alyosha.'

And he is right. It is at this point that Ivan's rebellion begins and that he becomes a God-struggler.

III

This is, however, only one aspect of his inner dilemma which in its further development becomes more complicated. For, if the world is filled with senseless suffering and injustice, there are possible two hypotheses: either God does not exist at all, and the whole universe is nothing but a casual meaningless 'vaudeville of devils'; or He exists, but has concealed from us His 'secret,' *i.e.*, the meaning of suffering and life. In the first case there is no Absolute Value, and self-will is the highest law for everybody. In the second case man is bound to hand in his 'entrance ticket.' And so Ivan is wavering between the void with

The 'Two Truths'

its 'all things are lawful' and that 'secret' which is beyond the limits of his comprehension. But if the 'secret' is beyond our earthly understanding, then there is no hope of mastering it. More, there is even no logical certainty that it actually exists. It can be envisaged not as a concrete reality, but only as a dim transcendental possibility.

Stavrogin's Golgotha was his incontestable void. Ivan's Golgotha was his uncertainty, his perpetual wavering between the void and the 'secret.' It is in this vacillation that he cries so desperately to his nightmare devil: 'Is there a God or not?'

But the devil, his 'trivial, paltry devil,' answers ironically (quite in the style of a perfect 'Euclidian understanding'): 'My dear fellow, upon my word I don't know. I have the same philosophy as you. "*Je pense, donc je suis.*" I know that for a fact; all the rest, all these worlds, God and even Satan—all that is not proved to my mind. Does all that exist of itself, or is it only an emanation of myself, a logical development of my Ego?'

And all that he himself knows about the 'secret' is this whimsical tirade: 'Before time was, by some decree which I could never make out, I was predestined to deny. And yet I am

Dostoevsky and his Creation

genuinely good-hearted and not at all inclined to negation. No, you must go and deny; without denial there would be nothing but one "hosanna." But nothing but hosanna is not enough for life; the hosanna must be tried in the crucible of doubt, and so on in the same style. But I don't meddle in that, I didn't create it, I am not answerable for it. Yes, till the secret is revealed, there are two sorts of truths for me—one, their truth, yonder, which I know nothing about so far, and the other my own. And there is no knowing which will turn out the better.'

The same devil suggests to him with irony in the name of his own truth that since there is no God and no immortality, the new man has the right to overstep all the moral principles of the old slave-man. 'All things are lawful, and that is the end of it.' On the other hand, he immediately adds still more bitingly: 'That is all very charming, but if you want to swindle, why do you want a moral sanction for doing it? But that's our modern Russian all over. He can't bring himself to swindle without a moral sanction. He is so in love with truth.'

Ivan's greatest torments arose from the fact that he really was too much in love with truth—that truth in which he could not believe, in spite

The 'Two Truths'

of all his longing. For his passionate negation was nothing but the result of his passionate craving for belief, for certainty.

'From the vehemence with which you deny my existence I am convinced that you believe in me,' taunts his nightmare devil.

'Not in the slightest. I haven't a hundredth part of a grain of faith in you.'

'But you have the thousandth of a grain. Homeopathic doses perhaps are the strongest. . . .'

'Not for one minute,' cried Ivan furiously. 'But I should like to believe in you,' he murmured strangely.

'I shall sow in you only a tiny grain of faith, and it will grow into an oak-tree, and such an oak-tree that, sitting on it, you will long to enter the ranks of hermits and the saintly women, for that is what you are secretly longing for. You'll dine on locusts, you'll wander into the wilderness to save your soul.'

Thus the devil delineates the inner struggle of Ivan who had too 'earnest a conscience' to accept a truth or Value (even though it were the Value of Christ Himself) without being certain that it is really an absolute Truth and not mere illusion and deception.

Dostoevsky and his Creation

IV

This everlasting uncertainty and hovering on the verge of the 'two truths' divided Ivan's personality to such an extent that everything he undertook was done with but one part of his Ego, *i.e.*, half-voluntarily.

That was especially the case in the murder of his father by the lackey Smerdyakov. Almost in a trance Ivan gave to Smerdyakov the moral sanction ('all things are lawful') to commit murder. And the inner process of his consciousness is in many ways analogous with that of Raskolnikov. Ivan also is urged to crime by his 'rebellious' subconscious self, whilst his super-conscious double eventually takes revenge. But he is as irresponsible for actual crime as was Raskolnikov—since the whole proceeding is carried on mainly below the surface of his consciousness.

We see, for instance, that in spite of his hatred of Smerdyakov, some inexplicable force attracted Ivan to him, and this subliminal force was stronger than his logic and will, stronger even than his pride and hatred. This is most clearly demonstrated in one of Ivan's accidental meetings with the lackey from whom he had previously

The 'Two Truths'

received some subtle hints of the planned murder. Ivan 'with a feeling of disgust and irritation tried to pass in at the gate without speaking or looking at Smerdyakov. But Smerdyakov rose from the bench, and from this action alone Ivan knew instantly that he wanted particularly to talk to him. Ivan looked at him and stopped, and the fact that he did stop, instead of passing by, as he meant to the minute before, drove him to fury. With anger and repulsion he looked at Smerdyakov's emaciated, sickly face, with the little curls combed forward on his forehead. His left eye winked and grinned as though to say, "Where are you going? You won't pass by; you see that we two clever people have something to say to each other. . . ." Ivan shook. "Get away, you miserable idiot. What have I to do with you?" was on the tip of his tongue, but to his profound astonishment he heard himself say: "Is my father still asleep, or has he waked? . . ." He asked the question softly and meekly, to his own surprise, and at once, again to his own surprise, sat down on the bench. For an instant he felt almost frightened; he remembered it afterwards. Smerdyakov stood facing him, looking at him with assurance and almost severity. . . .'

Dostoevsky and his Creation

Still in trance, he left the next morning in order to give a free hand to Smerdyakov, who said good-bye to him with the significant remark, 'It's always worth while speaking to a clever man.' But as soon as the crime was accomplished, a strange, half-conscious reaction set in. We learn that Ivan returned from Moscow intensely nervous, mournful and dispirited. He 'suddenly began to feel that he was anxious, not for the escape of Mitya (his half-brother, who by mistake had been arrested instead of Smerdyakov), but for another reason. "Is it because I am as much a murderer at heart?" he asked himself. Something very deep down seemed burning and rankling in his soul.'

He really felt frightened at the thought that Smerdyakov might perhaps have committed the crime. He visited him three times—not for the sake of Mitya, but merely to discover whether the lackey was the actual murderer. He wanted to be rid of all moral responsibility: the formula 'All things are lawful' proved to be too disturbing in practice.

Something curious happened also to Smerdyakov. After his crime he changed completely; he fell very ill, and when Ivan came the third time to see him to find out the truth, the lackey acknowledged his guilt with a strange

The 'Two Truths'

arrogance, flinging the following words at his torturer :—

'Here we are face to face; what's the use of going on keeping up a farce to each other? Are you still trying to throw it all on me, to my face? *You* murdered him; you are the real murderer. I was only your instrument, your faithful servant, and it was following your words I did it.'

"Did it? Why did you murder him?" Ivan turned cold. Something seemed to give way in his brain, and he shuddered all over. Smerdyakov himself looked at him wonderingly; probably the genuineness of Ivan's horror struck him.'

'You were bold enough then. You said, "everything is lawful," and how frightened you are now,' Smerdyakov muttered in surprise. And, giving the stolen money back to Ivan, he insisted: 'I don't want it. . . . I did have an idea of beginning a new life with that money in Moscow or, better still, abroad. I did dream of it, chiefly because "all things are lawful." That was quite right what you taught me, for you talked a lot to me about that. For if there's no everlasting God, there's no such thing as virtue, and there's no need of it. You were right there. So that's how I looked at it.'

Dostoevsky and his Creation

'Did you come to that of yourself?'

'With your guidance.'

'And now, I suppose, you believe in God, since you are giving back the money?'

'No, I don't believe,' whispered Smerdyakov.

'Then why are you giving it back?'

'Leave off . . . that's enough!' Smerdyakov waved his hand again. 'You used to say yourself that everything was lawful, so now why are you so upset, too? You even want to give evidence against yourself. . . .'

After this remarkable interview Smerdyakov hanged himself. . . . As for Ivan, he passed a terrible night of delirium, talking with his nightmare devil on some of the most tormenting questions that are possible within the compass of man's mind and consciousness. In the course of that dialogue Ivan's Ego was hurled into the farthest regions of psychological 'inadequate equations.' And while he strove in his last and most intense struggle to solve the problem of Value, the devil (*i.e.*, his own subconscious 'double') laughed at him; and he laughed particularly when alluding to Ivan's firm decision to give evidence against himself at the trial.

'You are going to perform an act of heroic virtue, and you don't believe in virtue, that is

The 'Two Truths'

what tortures you and makes you angry, that is why you are so vindictive. . . . No matter if they disbelieve you, you are going for the sake of principle. . . . Why do you want to go meddling, if your sacrifice is of no use to any one? Because you don't know yourself why you go! Oh, you'd give a great deal to know yourself why you go! . . . You must guess that for yourself. That's a riddle for you.'

In these terms Ivan explains to Alyosha the meaning of the devil's taunts, and cries in a rage: 'I hate the monster (Mitya, for whose sake he intends to give evidence against himself). Let him rot in Siberia! Oh, to-morrow I'll go, stand before them and spit in their faces.'

'The anguish of a proud determination, an earnest conscience,' thought Alyosha. 'God and His truth were gaining mastery over his heart, which still refuses to submit. . . . He will either rise up in the light of truth, or he will perish in hate, revenging on himself and on every one his having served the cause he does not believe in.'

He actually did give evidence against himself, 'spitting in their faces' in his delirious rage and scorn. And, of course, he did not 'rise in the light of truth.' The insoluble riddle crushed

Dostoevsky and his Creation

him together with his 'pitiful Euclidian understanding.' Although his intellect had tested and exhausted the depths of philosophical speculations, it did not bring him a single step nearer the solution of the 'secret.' The Sphinx of the 'two truths' stared at him with its cold gaze and kept silence. It was from this silence that Ivan became mad.

IX

CHRIST AND HIS DOUBLE

I

HAVING explored the passage of the 'two truths' to a dead wall, Dostoevsky finally risked (in Ivan's 'Legend of the Grand-Inquisitor') his unofficial confession as to the Value of Christ and the fate of humanity, weighed down by the problem of good and evil. To this effect he chose as Christ's accuser the Antichrist—disguised as the Grand-Inquisitor.

Ivan Karamazov founds his legend on the assumption that Christ returned to earth, appearing in Spain during the period of the Inquisition. He came 'softly, unobserved, and yet, strange to say, every one recognised Him.' Moving among the crowds of people, blessing and healing them, he raises a girl from the dead at the moment that the Grand-Inquisitor—'an old man, almost ninety, tall and erect, with a withered face and sunken eyes, in which there is still a gleam of light'—is passing by. The

Dostoevsky and his Creation

Inquisitor sees the miracle; and while the crowd is weeping at Christ's feet, he coldly orders his guards to take Him and throw Him into the dark prison of Seville, where, but a few hours later, both of them meet face to face.

It should be remembered that in Dostoevsky's Christ and in His accuser, too, there is a tragic greatness which exceeds any human standards. We also see that both of them love humanity with a passionate love. Their two loves, however, are quite different, even opposite. The Inquisitor pities and despises mankind, loving it, at the same time, as it is—with all its defects, its weakness and wickedness; Christ, on the contrary, manifests rather the creative and uncompromising love towards Man as he *should* be. It was out of this love for a New and Free Adam that He uttered the great words—'Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect!' But He demanded too much from the real man whom he rated too highly, thereby committing a great mistake. He gave to pigmies a way of life which is practicable only for giants. Hence His gift became not a blessing but a load to humanity. It was essential that such a heavy load should be lifted. And the Grand-Inquisitor deliberately set himself this task; to Christ's lofty love for the

Christ and His Double

farthest he opposed his compromising 'love of neighbours'; for he knew the pigmies too well, and he pitied them for their hopeless weakness, hopeless impotence, and corruption.

He himself does not believe either in Christ or in God. He faces the great cosmic void, but he is strong enough to face it. Moreover, he consciously takes upon himself the horror of this void, imposing, at the same time, upon humanity a comfortable lie as a substitute for the highest Truth and Value—in order to protect men from his own inner tragedy and secure for them the 'happiness of babes.' That is why he is so disturbed by Christ's reappearance. Why should He return to earth, if not to hinder him in his work by destroying his useful and necessary lie?

Seeing thus a menace for feeble mankind, the Inquisitor has imprisoned Him in order to burn Him the next morning at the stake—*ad majorem Dei gloriam*. . . . In the night, however, he visits his Prisoner to tell Him personally of His coming fate, and, still more, to justify his own action. Under the old arches of the prison the stern nonagenarian looks into the gentle eyes of the great Idealist, piling reproach on reproach.

Dostoevsky and his Creation

II

'Is it Thou? Thou?' demands the Inquisitor. 'Do not answer, be silent. What canst Thou say, indeed? And Thou hast no right to add anything to what Thou hast said of old. Why, then, art Thou come to hinder us? Hast Thou the right to reveal to us one of the mysteries of that world from which Thou hast come? No, Thou hast not; that Thou mayest not add to what has been said of old, and mayest not take from men the freedom which Thou didst exalt when Thou wast on earth. Whatsoever Thou revealest anew will encroach on men's freedom of faith; for it will be manifest as a miracle, and the freedom of their faith was dearer to Thee than anything in those days fifteen hundred years ago. Didst Thou not often say then, "I will make you free"? But now Thou hast seen these "free" men. . . . Yes, we have paid dearly for it. For fifteen centuries we have been wrestling with Thy freedom.'

In other words, we find here once more Dostoevsky's old question: How can we decide to follow Christ as an absolute Value and way of life, since we do not know whether His Value is within or outside the Truth? A free decision

Christ and His Double

without an assured guarantee is impossible; besides 'man prefers peace, and even death, to freedom of choice in good and evil.'

Instead of the cruel ancient law which imposed by force all the moral values, Christ wished to see the new Adam growing in that perfect inner freedom of which He Himself gave an example. He wanted to see mankind rise up to God-mankind. It was for this purpose that He bequeathed His image to humanity. But His image alone is not a sufficient guarantee that His Value really is within the Truth. Man's consciousness is too weak to accept a value on such conditions. . . . 'Didst Thou not know that he would at last reject even Thy image and Thy truth, if he is weighed down with the fearful burden of free choice? They will not have been left in greater confusion and suffering than Thou hast caused, laying upon them so many cares and unanswerable problems.'

So Christ did not raise man up to Himself because He had asked too much of him. Respecting man less and knowing him better, He would have asked less of him, 'and that would have been more like love, for his burden would have been lighter. . . .' In the best case, Christ's way proved to be for the elect—for those only who are strong enough to endure

Dostoevsky and his Creation

the 'freedom.' And it is here that Christ (as interpreted by Dostoevsky) and Christianity diverge. The Grand-Inquisitor himself opposes, so to speak, Christ in the name of that 'Christianity' which has degenerated into a religion of weakness, into a religion for weaklings. Furthermore, he demands Justice for such weaklings. For if Christ came only for the sake of the few elect, where then is Justice?

'Thy great prophet tells in vision and image that he saw all those who took part in the first resurrection, and that there were of each tribe twelve thousand. But if there were so many of them, they must have been not men but gods. They had borne Thy cross, they had endured scores of years in the barren, hungry wilderness, living upon locusts and roots—and Thou mayest indeed point with pride at those children of freedom, of free love, of free and splendid sacrifice for Thy name. But remember that they were only some thousands; and what of the rest? And how are the other weak ones to blame, because they could not endure what the strong have endured? How is the weak soul to blame that it is unable to receive such terrible gifts?' asks the old Inquisitor, rebelling (like Ivan Karamazov) out of love for his feeble 'neighbours.' He repudiates Christ—*out of*

Christ and His Double

love for humanity. . . . Being ashamed to take his place among the elect, since at the same time 'millions of creatures have been created as a mockery,' he prefers to serve the dread spirit of death and destruction rather than to sing hosanna in the blessedness of moral perfection.

'Canst Thou simply come to the elect and for the elect?' he questions further. 'But if so, it is a mystery and we cannot understand it. And if it is a mystery, we too have a right to preach a mystery, and to teach them that it is not the free judgment of their hearts, not love that matters, but a mystery which they must follow blindly, even against their conscience. We have corrected Thy work and have founded it upon *miracle, mystery, and authority*. And men rejoiced that they were again led like sheep, and that the terrible gift that had brought them such suffering was, at last, lifted from their hearts. Were we right teaching them this?'

And indeed, since the 'secret' is concealed for ever, there are for the pigmies but two issues: either the anarchy of self-will which can lead back to cannibalism, or an imposed lie—presented as incontestable Value, as a Value within the Truth. The Grand-Inquisitor chooses the latter, playing the part of an infallible spirit

Dostoevsky and his Creation

who alone knows the great mystery of good and evil. And humanity accepts his assumption of infallibility as the last and perhaps the only means of loosing the yoke of 'free choice.'

'Did we not love mankind, so meekly acknowledging their feebleness, lovingly lightening their burden, and permitting their weak nature even sin with our sanction? . . . Why hast Thou come to hinder us? And why dost Thou look silently and searchingly at me with Thy mild eyes? Be angry. I don't want Thy love, for I love Thee not. And is it for me to conceal from Thee our mystery? Perhaps it is Thy will to hear it from my lips. Listen, then. We are not working with Thee, but with *him* (*i.e.*, with Antichrist)—that is our mystery. It is long since we have been on *his* side and not on Thine.'

III

From the above passage it is not difficult to discover Dostoevsky's *arrière-pensée*, namely, his (in many respects one-sided) conception of the Roman Catholic Church with her subtle dogma of the infallibility of the Pope. Further utterances make still clearer Dostoevsky's attitude

Christ and His Double

towards official Roman Catholicism, emphasising at the same time his fears for the destiny of mankind, bereft of the true Christ.

The Grand-Inquisitor confesses openly that he has chosen not the kingdom of the other world, but of this world, yielding to the third temptation of the devil in the wilderness. Taking the sword of Cæsar, he has rejected Christ and followed the Tempter—always out of love for men. For he realises that Christ's bequeathed 'Freedom' will confront them—in spite of all their science—with such insoluble mysteries, and bring them to such desperate straits that 'some of them, the fierce and rebellious, will destroy themselves, others, rebellious but weak, will destroy one another, while the rest, weak and unhappy, will crawl fawning to our feet and whine to us: "Yes, you were right, you alone possess His mystery, and we come back to you, save us from ourselves."'

And then the 'infallible' Grand-Inquisitor of the future becomes master of the world. He alone decides and dictates what is good, what evil. He frees men from their inner freedom and gives to all the complaisance of satisfied children. They will come to him with every painful secret of their conscience, and he will have a ready solution for each difficulty, sparing

Dostoevsky and his Creation

them the great responsibility of a free decision. Millions of creatures will thus be happy; all will be happy—except those who rule over them and guard the secret. ‘There will be thousands of millions of happy babes, and a hundred thousand of sufferers who have taken upon themselves the curse of the knowledge of good and evil. Peacefully they will die, peacefully they will expire in Thy name, and beyond the grave they will find nothing but death. But we shall keep the secret, and for their happiness we shall allure them with the reward of heaven and eternity. For if there were anything in the other world, it certainly would not be for such as they. . . . It is prophesied that Thou wilt come again in victory, Thou wilt come with Thy chosen, the proud and strong; they will say that they have only saved themselves, but we have saved all. . . . Then I will stand up and point out to Thee the thousand millions of happy children who have known no sin. And we who have taken their sins upon us for their happiness will stand up before Thee and say: “Judge us if Thou canst and darest.” Know that I fear Thee not. Know that I too have been in the wilderness, I too have lived on roots and locusts, I too prized the freedom with which Thou hast blessed men,

Christ and His Double

and I too was striving to stand among the elect, among the strong and powerful, thirsting to "make up the number." But I awakened and would not serve madness. I turned back and joined the ranks of those *who have corrected Thy work*. I left the proud and went back to the humble, for the happiness of the humble.'

After these words, born of an inconceivable but defiant despair, this unbelieving martyr and saint concludes his self-justification: 'What I say to Thee will come to pass, and our dominion will be built up. I repeat, to-morrow Thou shalt see that obedient flock who, at a sign from me, will hasten to heap up the hot cinders about the pile on which I shall burn Thee for coming to hinder us. For if any one has ever deserved our fires, it is Thou. To-morrow I shall burn Thee. *Dixi.*'

The Grand-Inquisitor awaited an answer from his Prisoner who, all the while, was silently and gently looking into his face. But instead of the bitter and severe reply for which the old man was longing, Christ went up to him, and, without uttering a word—kissed him on his pale and bloodless lips. . . .

The Inquisitor shuddered. Then he opened the door, and turned to Christ:—

Dostoevsky and his Creation

‘Go, and come no more . . . come not at all, never, never!’

Christ silently went out and vanished into the dark alleys of the town.

So the meeting between Christ and Antichrist ended by Christ kissing His adversary. Not only this paradoxical end, but the whole legend perplexes us and leaves us in a state of doubt: we do not know who is right—Christ or His ‘double.’

Dostoevsky did not know either. And that was the core of his despair.

X

THE RELIGIOUS SELF-ASSERTION

I

IN Raskolnikov, Stavrogin, Kirillov, and Ivan Karamazov, Dostoevsky exhausted all the forms and possibilities of an individual self-assertion based on self-will. Each of these courses proved illusory, leading to self-destruction and the void. By means of them he also demonstrated that man *cannot* create an Absolute Value; this must exist outside of man, not as a subjective projection of one's personal will or as a *pium desiderium*, but as an objective, if transcendental, reality. In addition, he shows in Ivan Karamazov that it is impossible to obtain by intellectual effort the certainty that such an objective Value really exists: Ivan's powerful intellect perished in his attempt to discover the 'secret' which is beyond the limits of man's knowledge.

So we get a situation without any conclusion. On the one hand, the 'secret' is concealed from us—there is even no guarantee that it really

Dostoevsky and his Creation

contains the Value! but on the other, an 'earnest conscience' cannot accept—more, *it has even no right* to accept life as long as there exists the possibility that life may be a fortuitous play of unknown forces. . . . If the world and life be the pastime of a cruel higher Will, or simply the play of some stupid or malicious 'dark Power,' then the existence of suffering man and mankind is nothing but a terrible cosmic mockery, against which our insulted consciousness is bound to protest. The Individual is then bound to hate the whole of Cosmos, and by way of protest, to desire its destruction together with his own. 'I sentence this Nature—which created me insolently only to make me suffer—to disappear with me. As I cannot carry out my sentence in the whole by destroying Nature together with myself, I must destroy myself at least, and so be rid of a tyranny.'

The well-known 'scientific' solace that with death everything must end, only emphasises the mockery. As soon as we consider death as a complete annihilation of the Individual, we must put aside any question as to the real assertion of life—since an accidental and temporary existence cannot have a higher meaning, a 'superior idea.' Our ultimate destiny is then limited to the destiny of animals, and, if this

The Religious Self-Assertion *

be so, man has but one choice—an animal indifference to everything that is beyond his personal appetites and ‘utilitarian’ functions, or ‘rebellion’ and cosmic Nihilism.

In other words, there comes and must come, for the individual with a highly developed consciousness, a moment when he is placed in this dilemma: either my personal Ego must be eternal, or it does not desire to exist. My consciousness, my ‘soul’ must be immortal, otherwise I am bound to destroy myself.

· II

Hence Dostoevsky becomes something more than a mere dialectic preacher of morals when he states in his *Journal of an Author*: ‘Without a superior idea there cannot exist either the Individual or the Nation. But here, on earth, we have only one superior idea—and this is the idea of the *immortality of the soul*, because all other superior ideas have their source in this idea.’

On another occasion he expresses himself still more precisely on this subject in the following words: ‘The idea that the life of mankind is only a flash and that all will be reduced afterwards

Dostoevsky and his Creation

to nothing, kills even the love for mankind. And the consciousness that one cannot give any help to suffering humanity can change the love that you had for mankind into hatred of mankind. I assert even that the love for mankind is in general but slightly comprehensible and beyond the grasp of human soul. This love could be justified only by feeling, which is derived from the belief in the immortality of the soul. Without the conviction that our soul is immortal, the attachment of man to his planet would be abolished, and the loss of a higher meaning for life would lead undoubtedly to suicide.'

It may be of interest to observe that one of the most distinguished followers of Dostoevsky, the philosopher and publicist Dmitry Merezhkovsky, affirms still more categorically that the only true self-assertion is allowed by that individualism which projects one's personal Ego into eternity. 'If mankind,' he says, 'became empirically immortal, and at the same time Death remained only as a metaphysical possibility somewhere on the farthest domains of Time and Space—the man with a complete religious consciousness would not be able to accept the world. The religious, *i.e.*, the absolute assertion of life demands an absolute negation of death, an absolute victory over death.'

The Religious Self-Assertion

So we come to a complete revision of the question concerning our eternal life. The famous 'beyond' has existed so far as a luring compensation for the misfortunes and miseries of our existence. Hence no wonder that it was repellent to all those strong and vital natures who saw in it a menace to the fullness of our earthly life. But in the course of its development, our consciousness is bound to reach that stage in which it wants to assert itself in the very face of eternity—accepting the 'beyond,' not for the sake of an ascetic negation, but for the sake of the supreme assertion and fullness of our earthly existence itself.

Such a projection of our Ego into eternity we may define as Religious self-assertion of Individuality.

III

Dostoevsky's chief problem thus receives a new modification. After having examined the question of Value to the end, he finally was forced to choose either Ivan's fate and the path to self-destruction, or God and the immortality of the soul as an *Imperative of our consciousness*.

Dostoevsky adopted the second, endeavouring

Dostoevsky and his Creation

to reconcile by all means, logical or illogical, this strongest postulate of his consciousness with his intellect. The proofs of these endeavours we find not only in his novels, but also in his letters. 'If the *I* can grasp the idea of the universe and its laws,' he reasons, for instance, in a letter (written 1878), 'then that *I* stands above all other things, stands aside from all other things, judges them, fathoms them; and in that case the *I* is not only liberated from the earthly axioms, the earthly laws, but has its own law, which transcends the earthly. Now, whence comes that law? Certainly not from earth, where it reaches its issue, and vanishes beyond recall. Is *that* no indication of personal immortality? If there were no personal immortality, would you be worrying yourself about it, be searching for an answer? So you can't get rid of your *I*; your *I* will not subject itself to earthly conditions, but seeks for something which transcends earth, and to which it feels itself akin.'

At all events, he was compelled to accept God and immortality *a priori* in order to accept life and the world. But in doing this he naturally arrived again at his own conception of Christ's Value—since in it he found the only synthetic and absolute assertion of life. And if there is

The Religious Self-Assertion

no logical guarantee that Christ is within the Truth? In such a case He must either be accepted in spite of logic, accepted by our will and faith, or we must 'most respectfully return the ticket' to our God, like Ivan Karamazov.

It is at this point that Dostoevsky's struggle for faith begins. It is here that the divergence between him and Nietzsche becomes irreconcilable. Nietzsche, like Kirillov, exalted the path of self-will which excludes God in the name of Man-God, while Dostoevsky followed the path of God-Man and religious self-assertion. Yet he came to the necessity of God-Man through Man-God, for travelling on the very path of Nietzsche, he went further and saw more. Being aware of the last consequences of this course, he turned to Christ—in order to save himself from the lot of Stavrogin, Kirillov, Ivan, and Nietzsche himself. He wanted to believe in Christ, he wanted Him to be within the Truth. But as there was no certainty which alone could perhaps appease his 'doubles' and overcome the 'two truths,' he compelled himself to believe by the same free choice which previously had caused him so many inner torments and trials.

Putting the religious feeling of his consciousness higher than the promptings of his 'Euclidian

Dostoevsky and his Creation

understanding,' he would have answered as Prince Myshkin did (when asked by Rogozhin whether he believed in God or not): 'The essence of religious feeling has nothing to do with reason, or atheism, or crime, or acts of any kind—it has never to do with these things—and never had. There is something besides all this, something which the arguments of the atheists can never touch.' Or with Pascal: 'La raison ne se soumettrait jamais, si elle ne jugeait qu'il y a des occasions où elle se doit soumettre. Il est donc juste qu'elle se soumette quand elle juge qu'elle se doit soumettre.'

And so against the concluding watchword of Nietzsche, 'God is dead—long live the Superman!' the psychologist Dostoevsky could express his attitude towards the problem in a formula like this: 'God *must* exist, for otherwise man has no right to exist!'

This conviction was the only escape for his consciousness from the inevitable void and self-destruction.

XI

TOWARDS THE NEW SYNTHESIS

I

IN a curious allegorical sketch Dostoevsky writes of a certain 'Queer Fellow'¹ who dreamed that, after having committed suicide, he was transferred to another planet which represented an exact 'double' of our earth—with this difference, however, that its population was the blissful and innocent humanity before the fall. All the inhabitants were beautiful and happy like gods. 'They lived in the same paradise in which, according to the universal tradition of mankind, our fallen ancestors lived, save that here all the earth was everywhere one single paradise.'

But suddenly a terrible thing happened. In payment for their hospitality the Queer Fellow, who had come from our earth with his knowledge of good and evil, corrupted them all. He

¹ This sketch appeared in an English translation in the already-mentioned *Pages from the Journal of an Author*, with a short and interesting preface by Mr Middleton Murry.

Dostoevsky and his Creation

infected—'like a filthy germ, like an atom of pestilence'—that sinless population. All the inhabitants soon became deceitful, voluptuous, jealous and cruel. They started endless wars of disunion, and fierce quarrels for mine and thine spread like a fire.

Before long, science appeared among them. Instead of the former brotherhood there arose thousands of theories about brotherhood, about humanity and justice. They invented codes of law, as well as—guillotines in order to maintain these codes. Their old lost happiness became a dim legend at which they laughed. At the same time, in their growing chaos, they experienced such a great longing for their lost harmony (in which they did not believe any more), that they came to worship their impotent dreams of the forgotten paradise. And yet, if anybody had shown to them the way back to the happy state which they once enjoyed, they would have refused to accept it without the sanction of science. 'Grant that we are liars,' they would have answered, 'evil and unjust, we *know* that and weep for it, we torture and torment ourselves, and punish ourselves more hardly perhaps than even that merciful Judge, who will judge us and whose name we do not know. But we have science, and by her aid we will find the truth

Towards the New Synthesis •

again, and this time we will accept her consciously. Knowledge is higher than feeling; the consciousness of life is higher than life. Science will give us wisdom, wisdom will reveal to us laws, and the knowledge of the laws of happiness is higher than happiness.'

Egoism, self-worship, and self-deification developed everywhere. Everybody became a slave of his own petty self—so much so that he was prepared to sacrifice all his fellow-beings to its appetites and desires. All the worst passions and vices, all the sins and sorrows were now in full swing on that planet, which thus became in every respect an exact copy of our earth.

The 'Queer Fellow' himself was at last terrified by the results of his deed. 'I walked among them,' he confesses, 'wringing my hands, and wept over them, yet I loved them perhaps still more than when there was no suffering in their faces, and they were innocent and beautiful. I loved the earth which they had polluted more than when it was a paradise, for this alone, that sorrow had appeared upon it. Alas, I have always loved sorrow and sadness, and I wept for them, pitying them. I stretched out my hands to them, accusing, cursing, and despising myself in my despair. I told them that this was

**Dostoevsky and his Creation*

all my work, mine alone; that it was I who brought corruption, infection, and the lie among them! I implored them to crucify me on the cross, I taught them how to make a cross. I could not kill myself, I had not the power, but I wanted to submit to tortures from them, I longed that in those torments my last drop should be spilled. . . . Their sorrow so mightily entered my soul that my heart shrank and I felt that I would die.'

Here the 'Queer Fellow' awoke, and he himself adds that from that time he began to preach.

II

The 'Queer Fellow,' *i.e.*, Dostoevsky himself, really began to preach—the possibility of a new and conscious harmony which ought to be attained through the religious self-assertion of the Man to be. This ideal he tried to approach, or even to embody, in some of his characters. But while Dostoevsky gave a whole gallery of metaphysical rebels and God-strugglers, we find in his works relatively few representatives of the opposite, affirmative, type. Apart from that, in his 'positive' characters one always feels a certain

Towards the New Synthesis

amount of deliberate endeavour to make them positive at any cost, and that is the reason why they often seem 'stylised,' one-sided, and less convincing than their antagonists.

One of the most interesting and psychologically well-sustained attempts in this direction is undoubtedly the epileptic Prince Myshkin—the chief hero of *The Idiot*. He is the first important figure in which we find an antipodes of Dostoevsky's God-strugglers, and, at the same time, a 'perfect Christian' in that mystical 'Russian' sense which was so dear to Dostoevsky.

Therefore, it is not without a subtle *arrière-pensée* that he makes his Myshkin an *Ingénu*, and that we first meet him just at the moment when he has returned to Russia from a Swiss Sanatorium for the mentally deficient. Myshkin himself makes no secret of his former mental condition. At a nearer glance, however, we learn, to our great surprise, that in spite of all his 'idiocy' there is something in him that makes him wiser and more profound than all the clever and cunning people who surround him from the very beginning of his arrival in the Russian capital. Everybody, from Rogozhin and his band to Nastasya Philipovna and Epanchins, is immediately struck by his childish simplicity and trustfulness; nevertheless, all of

Dostoevsky and his Creation

them, even those who despise and exploit him at first (for instance, Lebedyev and Keller), finish by loving him, as though under the spell of some invisible charm. 'I ought to tell you that I never in my life met a man anything like him for noble simplicity of mind and for boundless trustfulness,' characterises him the proud Aglaya Epanchin. 'I guessed that any one who liked could deceive him, and that he would immediately forgive any one who did deceive him; and it was for this that I grew to love him.'

Thanks to his epilepsy, he himself is an 'outcast' on earth, although for this very reason his consciousness seems to be strangely in touch with those dimensions where 'time is no more.' From the so-called normal standpoint he often gives the impression of an 'idiot' simply because his logical intellect is in a way overwhelmed and absorbed by the streams of his higher, intuitive mind. That is his defect, and, at the same time, his great advantage. Or, as the same heroine addresses him in her naïve but very penetrative manner: 'If anybody says that your mind is—is sometimes affected, you know—it is unfair. Even if your surface mind be a little affected, yet your real mind is far better than all theirs put together. Such a mind as they have never dreamed of; because really,

Towards the New Synthesis

there are two minds—the kind that matters, and the kind that does not matter.'

Myshkin lives almost entirely with the first mind—'the kind that matters.' His consciousness, therefore, not being tyrannised by Ivan's 'Euclidian understanding,' he penetrates with his intuitive, religious perception of reality more deeply into the secrets of life than any mere 'surface mind' would do.

In other words, Myshkin suffers from the same disease as Dostoevsky, experiencing in his epileptic fits those flashes of enlarged consciousness through which—for a few moments at least—the eternal harmony becomes a reality. But while Dostoevsky never could cover the truth of his enlarged consciousness with his intellect, he deliberately tried to reduce the 'surface mind' of Myshkin to such an extent as to abolish any dangerous and embarrassing inner cleavage. Thus we are not wrong if we see in Myshkin Dostoevsky himself—without Dostoevsky's disturbing 'doubles.'

In shaping this character, the author proceeded with an extreme psychological tact and yet, by eliminating all the antithetic features, he made him too bloodless and static. Myshkin is in truth the most static of all the main characters created by Dostoevsky's genius. He offers no

Dostoevsky and his Creation

tragic conflict between good^{er} and evil. He is good because by nature he cannot be evil, and the same could be said of his chastity. Even in his wavering between Aglaya whom he loves and Nastasya Philipovna whom he pities, he is too passive, for he shows no will, no conscious struggle. So much so that one of the characters reproaches him: 'The most probable explanation of the matter is that you never loved either the one or the other in reality.' At times he really seems to be but an 'abstract spirit' who has inadvertently wandered on earth, and whose mind—after all the painful and fantastic adventures—clouds again, passing completely over into the spheres of psychological 'indeterminate equations' without any hope of recovery. This occurs in the ghastly final scene, by the body of his runaway bride, Nastasya Philipovna, which is watched all the night by her delirious murderer, Rogozhin, and by Myshkin.

That scene, one of the most powerful in all literature, closes with the following remark: 'When, after many hours, the door was opened and people thronged in, they found the murderer unconscious and in a raging fever. The prince was sitting by him, and each time that the sick man gave a laugh, or a shout, he hastened to pass his own trembling hand over his companion's

Towards the New Synthesis

hair and cheeks, as though trying to soothe and quiet him. But alas! he understood nothing of what was said to him, and recognised none of those who surrounded him. If Schneider himself had arrived then and seen his former pupil and patient, remembering the prince's condition during the first year in Switzerland, he would have flung up his hands despairingly, and cried as he did then: "An idiot!"

III

In his last work Dostoevsky endeavoured to portray more living and more dynamic religious characters in the monk Zossima, and particularly in Alyosha Karamazov.

They are not, indeed, pale, anæmic figures like Myshkin, but vital and alive. Yet both of them are too sketchy, drawn too hurriedly. Many things in them Dostoevsky does not even touch on. Had they been tortured by the cleavage and questions of Ivan Karamazov? Had they found their solution? (The sentimental story of Zossima's past is not satisfying in this respect.) At any rate, Dostoevsky was prudent enough to present both of them, not as on

Dostoevsky and his Creation

the way to, but as already in the state of, a synthetic inner harmony.¹

This may be said especially of Alyosha. Among all the split and self-divided heroes, Alyosha unexpectedly appears on the stage as an harmonious type. He is neither a brooding character like Ivan, nor a purely sensual one like his father, nor a 'holy' one like Myshkin, nor absorbedly passionate and emotional like Mitya. He rather contains them all. His consciousness manifests, as it were, a new focus for the reconciliation of all the 'doubles,' as well as of the whole of life—of the soul and body, of logic and faith, of Heaven and Earth. His Christianity is not the ascetic Christianity of the catacombs: it is not the negation and hatred of earth, but the highest expression of love of earth and of heaven alike. It is the fullest assertion of life in all God's creation.

'Love all God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things,' says Father Zossima, to whom belong also these beautiful words: 'God took seeds from different

¹ Alyosha's harmony is rather the harmony before the self-division: Dostoevsky intended to write a continuation of '*Brothers Karamazov*' with Alyosha as the main figure, but death prevented this.

Towards the New Synthesis

worlds and sowed them on this earth, and His garden grew up and everything came up that could come up, but what grows, lives, and is alive only through the feeling of its contact with other mysterious worlds. If that feeling grows weak or is destroyed in you the heavenly growth will die away in you. Then you will be indifferent to life and even grow to hate it.'

In these utterances is sounded the characteristic note of the Christianity of Zossima and of his active, energetic and joyful disciple, Alyosha, who is a striking contrast to the bloodless Christian, Myshkin. And his flashes of higher consciousness are not due to any sickness, but rather to the overflowing abundance of his inner health.

He is not a stranger at the 'glorious festival of life,' but one of the first guests. And the more he feels the contact with the 'other mysterious worlds' the more profound and beautiful seems to him the mystery of this world. Such a union between the mystery of stars and the mystery of earth filled Alyosha's soul in the night after his symbolic dream about Cana of Galilee.

'He went quickly down; his soul overflowing with rapture, yearned for freedom, space, openness. The vault of heaven, full of soft, shining

Dostoevsky and his Creation

stars, stretched vast and fathomless above him. The Milky Way ran in two pale streams from the Zenith to the horizon. The fresh, motionless, still night enfolded the earth. The white towers and golden domes of the cathedral gleamed out against the sapphire sky. The gorgeous autumn flowers in the beds around the house were slumbering till morning. The silence of earth seemed to melt into the silence of the heavens. The mystery of earth was one with the mystery of stars. Alyosha stood, gazed, and suddenly threw himself down on the earth. He did not know why he embraced it. He could not have told why he longed so irresistibly to kiss it, to kiss it all. But he kissed it weeping, sobbing and watering it with his tears, and vowed passionately to love it, to love it for ever. . . . In his rapture he was weeping even over those stars which were shining to him from the abyss of space and he was not ashamed of that ecstasy. There seemed to be threads from all those innumerable worlds of God, linking his soul to them, and it was trembling all over in "contact with other worlds." He longed to forgive every one and everything. With every instant he felt clearly and, as it were, tangibly, that something firm and unshakable as that vault of heaven had entered into his soul. It was as

Towards the New Synthesis?

though some idea had seized the sovereignty of his mind—and it was for all his life and for ever and ever.'

IV

It is enough to read this passage to feel that the Christian Alyosha loves the Earth with a fervent, religious passion. And this inner growth through union with 'the mystery of earth and of stars,' this ecstatic overwhelming love for earthly life, for all God's creation, should—in Dostoevsky's conception—be the result of that new Christianity which he identified with the highest, *i.e.*, religious assertion of Individuality and Life. It is a synthetic blending of the antagonistic 'earthly' and 'heavenly' principles on that plane which Ibsen termed in his *Emperor and Galilean* as the coming 'Third Empire.'

Dostoevsky thus conceived the vision of a future harmonious 'superman' in the direction of God-Man whose consciousness would enlarge itself to such limits that God, Universe and Eternity would cease to be mere ideas for him, and become living inner realities. The immense consequences and possibilities of such

Dostoevsky and his Creation

a course will be clear if we realise that the path to this goal leads not through cowardly avoiding, but through facing our inner dilemmas with all their doubts and negation. This painful process may go so far as to imply even the conflicts of eternal cosmic antinomies which choose our soul for their battlefield. And the more we feel that these conflicts take place in man's consciousness the closer may be our individual contact with, and our participation in, world-building, world-evolution. The great drama of Cosmos may become our personal drama. . . . The logical conclusion is that every one of us is responsible for the whole of the World and for the whole of Life—responsible for all and for everything.

Such an enlarged religious consciousness with the possibility of a new Harmony lies not behind mankind, but before it—as the final achievement, as the crown of man's evolution and man's Calvary. Dostoevsky himself had but occasional 'pathologic' glimpses into this highest harmony. And although he never could quite reconcile them with his rebellious intellect, he was bound to accept them at last by reasons which were stronger than his intellect. And so he came to contemplate not only his own self, but also the whole of humanity, as well as all

Towards the New Synthesis

the cultural and political activities of his epoch, from the standpoint of his new religious ideal. And the more he suffered from his doubts and scepticism, the more passionately he 'preached.' Anxious, evidently, to convince not so much others as his own sceptical self, he arrived in some of his polemical articles even at a kind of ideological fanaticism.

An interesting document in this respect is his *Journal of an Author* in which he tried to formulate his views on Culture, Religion, and especially on his favourite theme—the 'Russian Idea.' In the dust and heat of his disputes he analysed there all contemporary cultural values, and—whatever our personal attitude towards his conclusions may be—we cannot deny the profundity of his criticism or the importance of his diagnosis concerning modern humanity.

XII

CULTURE AND RELIGION

I

It is astonishing how many psychological political and social mistakes occur purely as the result of ideological errors and confusions. And there are so many different, even quite opposite, factors, ideas, and values which have been, and still are being, confused: creed with religion, plebeianism with democracy, erudition with culture, culture with civilisation.

Particularly unfortunate, although very general, is the confusion of culture with civilisation. And yet the distinction between them is as necessary as it is considerable. This distinction can be made plain by briefly defining culture as the complex of all the inner or spiritual values of mankind (religion, art, philosophy) and civilisation as the sum of all the external values (industry, technics, trade, politics, etc.)

A nation, like an individual, may be highly civilised, and, at the same time, without culture.

Culture and Religion

History affords examples of races which have had a high culture, but a much lower degree of civilisation (the ancient Indians); and also of such as have had a great civilisation, but a relatively lower, eclectic or borrowed culture—for instance, the Romans, and, in modern times, the Americans. One can even state that the hidden drama of history is an everlasting struggle between the external and the inner values of mankind, a struggle between Spirit and Matter, between culture and 'civilisation.'

Looking more carefully at this antagonism—which in many respects corresponds to the conflict between soul and body in the individual—we discover an interesting fact: the external values (the values of civilisation) usually strive to subdue to their purposes the inner cultural values, and *vice-versa*. So long as the cultural evolution keeps pace with the speed of materialistic civilisation, culture can make a more or less firm stand. But as soon as the speed of civilisation becomes quicker there arises a menace to culture. And the greater the difference between their rates of speed, the more imminent this menace: the velocity of civilisation develops at the expense of culture. The cleavage can be carried even to the point where the values of culture become completely subdued, strangled

Dostoevsky and his Creation

and absorbed by the values of civilisation. We then arrive at a striking paradox: the stronger the civilisation, the poorer the culture; the more 'civilised' we are, the less cultured we become.

Unfortunately, the whole of so-called modern progress is travelling in this direction. All European culture is gradually being exhausted and dominated by purely external values. Modern Germany recently presented an eloquent illustration, for there the *salto mortale* from the sphere of culture into the sphere of mere 'technical' civilisation took place more rapidly than in any other country. But the rest of European nations are taking the same path and equally without finding a 'superior idea' by means of which to change this course and save themselves from civilisation for civilisation's sake. And so Europe is without cultural perspective, without that vital 'spirit of life' which could pour new contents into our tired, disillusioned and 'civilised' souls. In the manner of an eternal Tartuffe we are repeating and chewing the old mouldy values, well knowing that no one believes them; and while a growing despair gnaws at our spirit, we stay helpless at that cross-roads where the most difficult dilemma

Culture and Religion

of humanity must be solved: either we must find a 'superior idea' which can subdue civilisation to cultural values, or culture as such will perish for ever.

But where is the possibility of making such a transvaluation not in words only, but also in deeds? Is there any such possibility? Are we not too 'poor in spirit,' too 'civilised' for such a task?

II

More than any one in Europe, Dostoevsky was haunted by this question, as he looked at the inevitable mechanisation and materialisation of mankind. The great Tower of Babel of modern civilisation grew with incredible rapidity before his eyes—displacing and trampling down all inner values. The chaotic differentiation between science and religion, religion and culture, culture and life, had reached its climax. In consequence, science itself has become an agent of destruction to mankind (inventing poisonous gas, perfecting guns and other murderous instruments), while religion has degenerated into static 'creeds' which stand

Dostoevsky and his Creation

in the way of any real spiritual regeneration and progress. Those cultural elements which still remained were not strong enough to subdue or give direction to the colossal growth of mechanical civilisation. Instead of this, they were compelled to adapt themselves to the aims of the latter, making way for the greatest monster the earth ever produced—Modern Capitalism.

Dostoevsky was one of those who believed that the chief cause of such evil lay in the elimination of the true religious consciousness from life and culture. 'In the origin of any people or any nation,' he writes in his *Journal of an Author*, 'the moral idea has always preceded the birth of the nation, because it was the moral idea which created the nation. This moral idea always issued forth from mystical ideas, from the conviction that man is eternal, that he is more than an earth-born animal, that he is united to other worlds and to eternity. Those convictions have always and everywhere been formulated into a religion, into a confession of a new idea, and always so soon as a new religion began, a new nationality was also created immediately. Consider the Jews and Moslems. Therefore, civic ideals are always directly and organically connected with moral

Culture and Religion

ideas, and generally the former are created by the latter alone. Therefore, self-perfection in the spirit of religion in the life of nations is the foundation of everything. But when nationality begins to lose the desire within itself for a common self-perfection of its individuals in the *Spirit which gave it birth*, then all the civic institutions gradually perish.'

The complete absence of such a spirit in our civic institutions was one of the reasons why Dostoevsky had such a pessimistic and gloomy opinion as to the future of Europe. Even in the great socialist movement he saw only an *agent of civilisation*, as such, not an agent of culture—in so far at least as socialism is based on merely external values: on shallow utilitarianism and economic interests. He was against that kind of socialism which presents 'the form taken by atheism to-day, the question of the Tower of Babel built without God.' And this fact alone may sufficiently explain his feverish polemics and philippics against purely materialistic socialists and socialist doctrines.

'They have science,' he writes, 'but in science there is nothing but what is the object of sense. The spiritual world, the higher part of man's being is rejected altogether, dismissed with a sort of triumph, even with hatred. The

Dostoevsky and his Creation

world has proclaimed the reign of freedom, especially of late, but what do we see in this freedom of theirs? Nothing but slavery and self-destruction.' And on another occasion he points out: 'Human nature is not taken into account . . . they do not want a *living soul*. And it comes in the end to their reducing everything to the building of walls and passages in a phalanstery. You can't skip over nature by logic. Logic presupposes three possibilities, but there are millions! Cut away a million and reduce it all to a question of comfort! That is the easiest solution of the problem. . . . The whole secret of life in two pages of print!'

Like his antipodes, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky hated also the cultural dilettantism, peculiar to many preachers of modern pseudo-democracy. He saw in them the dangerous apostles of half-truths which he defined as 'the most terrible scourge of humanity, unknown till this (*i.e.*, nineteenth) century and worse than plague, famine, or war. A half-truth is a despot such as has never been in the world before. A despot that has its priests and slaves, a despot to whom all do homage with love and superstition hitherto inconceivable, before which science itself cringes and trembles in a shameful way.'

'What are the men I have broken with?'

Culture and Religion

exclaims his repentant revolutionary Shatov. 'The enemies of all true life, out-of-date liberals who are afraid of their own independence, the flunkeys of thought, the enemies of individuality and freedom, the decrepit advocates of deadness and rottenness. All they have to offer is senility, a glorious mediocrity of the most *bourgeois* kind, contemptible shallowness, a jealous equality, equality without individual dignity, equality as it is understood by flunkeys. And the worst of it is there are swarms of scoundrels among them, swarms of scoundrels!'

This utterly aggressive, almost hysterical hatred emphasises once more how repellent to Dostoevsky was the mere idea of a compulsory '*fraternité ou la mort!*' Knowing too well the inner nature of man, he was far from believing in the possibility of a real brotherhood in the name of exclusively forensic, utilitarian principles. Therefore, he wanted a radical regeneration from within, not only from without. He wanted a spiritual revolution on which a social regeneration could be based and built. And the path to such a regeneration of man he found, or believed he had found, as we know, in an organic connection between Christ's Value and life. In other words, Christ (as He was understood by Dostoevsky) ought to be accepted not only by our 'reason.' He

' *Dostoevsky and his Creation*

ought to enter and change the entire consciousness of mankind! this would be the greatest mental, as well as the greatest social, revolution on earth—revolution from within.

III

A revolution of this kind was the aim of Dostoevsky and of Tolstoy also. Both of them were convinced that humanity remains real humanity only if united by an inner, religious, free bond, and that every society built up on compulsory 'juridical' principles is more or less slavish. They rejected every purely legal 'brotherhood,' realising that such an association either abolishes God as an inner reality of our consciousness, or gives Him a utilitarian conception, *i.e.*, makes of Him a complement to gendarme and police. (A classical example of such a conception we find in the famous and rather shallow aphorism of Voltaire, '*Si Dieu n'existait pas il faudrait l'inventer.*') In a union of this kind religion must gradually be replaced by one-sided science and 'reason,' the inner conscience by the external law, ethics by etiquette (*i.e.*, by the rules of behaviour, and of

Culture and Religion

hygiene), Christ's love for man by 'economic interests' and *Contrat Social*.

In his aversion to any legalistic institutions Tolstoy, for instance, came to a repudiation of all forensic authority and law. Dostoevsky, in the same manner, preferred even the naïve orthodoxy of Russian peasants to contemporary utilitarian socialist theories and Utopias. No grand phrases, no learned statistics and statements ever convinced him that Karl Marx could be more right than Christ. 'If our hope is a dream, when will you build up your edifice and order your things justly by your intellect alone, without Christ?' he asks. 'If they (the socialists) declare that they are advancing towards unity, only the most simple-hearted among them believe it, so that they may positively marvel at such simplicity. They aim at justice but, denying Christ, they will end by flooding the earth with blood, for blood cries out for blood.'

Expecting the salvation of mankind from a complete union, of civilisation, culture, and religion, Dostoevsky finally opposed to all the current socialist Utopias his own religious Utopia in which he tried to visualise the future of mankind as a realisation of the 'second advent' of Christ—as a religious union of all individuals

'Dostoevsky and his Creation

and nations in a living Universal Church, representing God's Kingdom on earth, or rather, in our consciousness. 'It is true, the Christian society now is not ready, and is only resting on some seven righteous men, but as they are never lacking, it will continue still unshaken in expectation of its complete transformation from a society almost heathen in character into a single *universal church*. And so be it. Even though at the end of ages, for it is ordained to come to pass,' says his elder Zossima.

In all revolutions and reforms hitherto there have been only quantitative improvements. Dostoevsky believed that Earth is awaiting a spiritual revolution which will open a new path and offer a new basis for the future of mankind.

The nucleus of this belief he embodied mainly in his conception of the Russian or Slav idea.

XIII

THE 'RUSSIAN IDEA

I

THE true Russian or Slav idea, as conceived and expressed by Dostoevsky, and some of the most prominent Slavophiles, had, in its substance, little to do with any political Pan-Slavonic or Pan-Russian propaganda. It was a literary, or rather, a religious-philosophical movement, based partly on Hegel, and aiming, above all, at an amalgamation of all the creative philosophic, scientific, and social values with a pure Christianity. One of the leaders of this movement, Sergey Aksakov, defined Slavophilism (in a letter to Dostoevsky in 1863) as the 'Christian Idea pushed to its furthest limits,' and many genuine Slavophiles have endeavoured to write, to speak, and sometimes even to act, on these lines. Being aware of the materialism by which all modern capitalistic Europe was infected, they considered a passive Europeanisation of the Russian people identical with the materialisation

• Dostoevsky and his Creation

of Russia. Anxious to avoid that, they sought in the true Russian Spirit for those elements and values which might counterbalance the menace of a materialistic civilisation for civilisation's sake.

Some of them believed that such elements were to be found in old patriarchal Russian institutions; others sought for them in the Orthodoxy of the Russian Church; others again in the profound religious instinct of the Russian people. Unfortunately, with few exceptions, the seekers were too one-sided, attaching too much importance to external, even ethnographic or folkloristic attributes. In the meantime, the Russian Westernisers struggled fanatically for a complete Europeanisation of Russia.

It may be said that almost the whole of the Russian culture of the nineteenth century developed from the impetus of these two movements in which so many Russian writers, scientists and politicians were involved. As to the tactics and tension between the two parties, we can point to the fact that Dostoevsky did not hesitate to portray in his *Possessed* a stinging caricature of his *confrère* Turgenev (under the name of the writer Karmazinov) to take revenge and make a mock of Turgenev's Western

The ' Russian Idea '

trend.¹ The novel *Possessed* is on the whole Dostoevsky's most bitter attack on those ultra-revolutionaries, who are nurtured in Western positivism and materialism, as well as on the inevitable outcome of their destructive activities. One of the chief characters of the novel, the revolutionary Peter Verhovensky, expounds, for instance, almost in an ecstasy, some of the methods as to the formation of a future ' democratic ' Russia—methods which in our days seem to have become more than a mere theory.

' Listen,' he raves to Stavrogin, ' first of all we'll make an upheaval. We shall penetrate to the peasantry. . . . On all sides we see vanity puffed up out of all proportions, brutal, monstrous appetites. . . . Do you know how many we shall catch by little ready-made ideas ? The Russian God has already been vanquished by cheap vodka. Oh, this generation has only to grow up. One or two generations of vice are essential now; monstrous, abject vice by which a man_{is} is transformed into a loathsome, cruel, egoistic reptile. That's what we need. And what's more, a little " fresh blood " that we may get accustomed_{to} to it. . . . We will proclaim destruction. . . . We'll set fires

¹ Turgenev, on his part, satirised the Slavophiles in his novel, *Smolsk*.

Dostoevsky and his Creation

going. . . . We'll set legends going. . . . There's going to be such an upset as the world has never seen before. . . . Russia will be overwhelmed by darkness, the earth will weep for its old gods.

'Listen, Stavrogin. To level the mountains is a fine idea, not an absurd one. Down with culture. The thirst for culture is an aristocratic thirst. . . . We will make use of drunkenness, slander, spying; we'll stifle every genius in its infancy. We'll reduce all to a common denominator! Complete equality! Only the necessary is necessary: that is the motto of the whole world henceforward.'

II

The latent possibility of such a 'democratic' prospect always caused Dostoevsky to attack and ridicule the radical Westernisers in a most virulent manner. And opposing to them his own *Credo* he originated—in spite of all inconsistencies—the most pan-human conception of the Russian Idea, by which he aimed at a cultural regeneration of all mankind.

'The future Russian Idea is not yet born, but the whole earth is awaiting it in pain and

The ' Russian Idea '

sickness,' he pronounces, while endeavouring to glean its elements from the mysterious depths and longings of his people. Convinced that each great nation must have its own calling, he saw the mission of Russia in the task of saving the Spirit of mankind from the death-clutch of the capitalistic Machine-triumphant. Therefore he was anxious to gather from the Soul of his race all the necessary factors to imbue contemporary life with a 'superior idea' and to subordinate our material civilisation to the aims of culture—by giving to the latter a religious basis. In the Russians, and in the Slavs in general, he believed to have discovered an instinctive tendency in this direction. 'I make no attempt,' he wrote on this topic in his *Journal*, 'to compare Russia with the Western nations in the matter of economic or scientific renown. I say only that the Russian people is perhaps among all nations the most capable of upholding the ideal of universal union of mankind, of brotherly love, of the calm conception which forgives contrasts. This is not an economical, but a *moral* trait; and can any one deny that it is present in the Russian people?'

'Among us (Russians) has been created by the ages a type of the highest culture ever seen before, and existing nowhere else in the

Dostoevsky and his Creation

world—the type of world-wide compassion for all,’ affirms Versilov in the *Raw Youth*. And this universal compassion, or rather, universal sympathy, Dostoevsky claimed to have traced even in Russian history, and especially in Russian literature. Some few months before his death, he resolutely emphasised this in his fervid although somewhat sentimental, speech on Pushkin which he concluded: ‘To a true Russian Europe and the destiny of all the mighty Aryan family is as dear as Russia herself, because our destiny is universality, won not by the sword, but by the strength of brotherhood and our fraternal aspiration to reunite mankind. And, in course of time, I believe that we shall, without exception, understand that to be a true Russian does indeed mean to aspire finally to reconcile the contradictions of Europe, to show the end of European yearning in our Russian soul, omni-human and all-uniting, to include within our soul by brotherly love all our brethren, and at last, it may be, to pronounce the final word of the great general harmony, of the final brotherly communion of all nations in accordance with the law of the gospel of Christ!’

On another occasion he described his Russian Idea as a *spiritual* union of all true Russian Christians ‘with the aim of giving to Russia

The ' Russian Idea '

such a moral authority that she could finally pronounce to all mankind the expected word—for the sake of a universal union, the idea of which always lived in the Slavonic, and especially in the Russian, soul.'

Seeing in Russia elemental virgin forces which, unless they find their creative expression, must degenerate into an elemental destructive chaos, he tried to awaken in her a strong conscious tendency to cultural self-realisation. 'Reveal to the yearning companions of Columbus the "New World,"' he exclaims through his Prince Myshkin, 'reveal to the Russian the "world" of Russia, show him the whole of humanity, rising again, and renewed by Russian thought alone, perhaps by the Russian God and Christ, and you will see what a mighty and truthful, what a wise and gentle giant he will rise before the eyes of the astounded world.'

III

In most of his later works Dostoevsky attempted to 'reveal to the Russian the "world" of Russia,' as well as the Russian conception of God and Christ. Realising all the dangers and horrors of a revolution for the sake of mere bread and

Dostoevsky and his Creation

comfort, he was anxious to find in his people a 'God-bearing' nation, that is to say, a nation which has preserved in its consciousness the highest religious potency and the possibility of that Value, which alone can regenerate the whole of humanity from within—the Value of Christ. That is why he emphasises again and again that 'Russia must reveal to the world her own Russian Christ (*i.e.*, the Russian conception of Christ), whom as yet the peoples know not. . . . *There* lies, as I believe, the inmost essence of our vast impending contribution to civilisation, whereby we shall awaken the European peoples; there lies the inmost core of our exuberant and intense existence that is to be.'

In European Christianity he found, instead of Christ, only a dead and rationalistic formula of His Doctrine; in the religious spirit of the Russian peasants he believed he had discovered, on the other hand, Christ as a living symbol, as a mystical reality in man's consciousness. And this mystical conception he opposed to the European rationalistic and 'distorted' Christ, especially to Roman Catholicism, in which he saw a prolongation of the Roman Empire. Such a view of Catholicism Dostoevsky symbolised, as we have seen, in his 'Grand-Inquisitor'; he preached it through Myshkin, and in one of

The ' Russian Idea '

his last polemics he even gave a short survey of the whole drama of Christianity from this standpoint. ' After the first Christian communities had arisen,' he explains, " there speedily began to be created a new and hitherto unheard-of nationality, a nationality of universal brotherhood, in the shape of the catholic œcumenical Church. But the Church was persecuted and the ideal grew beneath the earth; and above it, on the face of the earth, an immense building was also formed, a huge ant-hill, the old Roman Empire, which was also the ideal and the outcome of the moral aspirations of the whole ancient world. But the ant-hill did not fortify itself; it was undermined by the Church. Then occurred the collision of the two most opposite ideas that could exist in the world. The Man-God met the God-Man, the Apollo-Belvedere met the Christ. A compromise arose; the empire accepted Christianity, and the Church accepted the Roman State. The Church was destroyed and finally transformed into the State. The Papacy appeared—the continuation of the ancient Roman Empire in a new incarnation. In the Eastern half the State was subdued and destroyed by the sword of Mahomet, and there remained Christ alone, already separated from the Church. But the State, which had accepted

Dostoevsky and his Creation

and exalted Christ anew, suffered such terrible and unending sufferings at the hands of its enemies, from the Tartar kingdom, from disorganisation, from Serfdom, from Europe and Europeanism, and endures so much until this day, that a real social formula in the sense of spirit of love and Christian self-perfection has not yet been evolved in it.'

Dostoevsky's hopes were, however, based much more on the innate religious spirit of the Russian people than on the 'State,' or on the official Orthodox Church with which he never could quite reconcile his own Christianity. (The elder Zossima, who typifies Dostoevsky's perception of the true 'Orthodoxy,' is as heretical from the official Orthodox, as from the Roman Catholic standpoint). Anyhow, he tried to bring himself to Russian Orthodoxy through the religious instinct of his people and for the sake of this instinct which he defined as 'hopes of fraternity and universal union in the name of Christ; hopes which the Russian people will never abandon. Such a union does not exist so far, but the new Church, a Church that will not be satisfied with prayers, but will command action, such a Church exists already in the hearts of the Russian peasants. The socialism of the Russian people is expressed neither by

The ' Russian Idea '

communistic theories, nor by any mechanical formulæ, but by its deep longing for a universal union in the name of Christ.'

Thus we arrive anew at Zossima's Utopia of a Universal Church, *i.e.*, of a universal inner union of all mankind. To show the path and to realise such a brotherhood—that should be the true task and aim of the Russian or Slav Idea, as it was interpreted by Dostoevsky.

IV

This short outline may suffice to reveal the religious kernel of Dostoevsky's Slavophilism. On the other hand, the fact should be once more pointed out that in his social, as well as religious, *credo* there was more of will to belief than of belief itself. But in so far as he succeeded in believing, he was a typical Slavonic Messianist, like many other great Russians, like some Poles, like the Czech poet, Jan Kollar, and the Southern-Slav poets, Preradovich and Nyegosh.

He was perfectly familiar with all the defects and faults of his race—a chaotic, split, irrational, and tragic race, like Dostoevsky himself; but knowing also all the depths of its profound, eternally longing, eternally suffering soul, he

Dostoevsky and his Creation

still cherished the hope that his nation might fulfil a great mission for the sake of mankind.

He hoped, like his hero, Stepan Trofimovich (*The Possessed*), who before his death listens to the parable of the devils, driven out by Jesús, and says: 'You see, that is exactly like our Russia, those devils that come out of the sick and enter into the swine. They are all the sores, all the contagions, all the impurities, all the devils great and small that have multiplied in that great invalid, our beloved Russia, in the course of ages and ages. But a great idea and a great Will will encompass it from on high, as with that lunatic possessed of devils . . . and all those devils will come forth, all impurity, all rottenness that was putrefying on the surface . . . and they will beg of themselves to enter into swine. . . . But the sick man will be healed and will sit at the feet of Jesus, and all will look upon him with astonishment.'

XIV

CONCLUSION

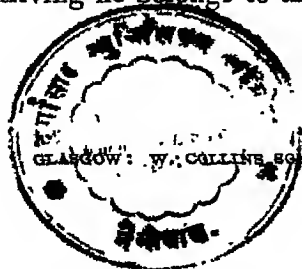
ALL that has been said about Dostoevsky in these brief sketches has been but an attempt to trace that ultimate spring of his creation round which grouped themselves naturally all his literary, psychological, and philosophical motives. Hence, the present series does not sum up even approximately the significance of this strange genius in whose soul the spiritual tragedy of contemporary 'higher man' found, not only one of its strongest echoes, but also one of the most desperate endeavours to find an outlet.

What is especially valuable in him is the fact that it is impossible to draw a line between Dostoevsky the man, and Dostoevsky the artist, since all his art was an organic and necessary result of his actual inner experience, and not of the imagination of a *littérateur*. He saw much, not from a psychological curiosity (which is so characteristic of many modern 'psychological' writers), not even because he wanted to see, but because he was impelled to see—impelled,

Dostoevsky and his Creation

as it were, by some higher will which made him its medium, and, at the same time, its victim. And while probing all the depths of the mysterious 'underworld,' he reached that critical line of the human self beyond which there is either a complete self-annihilation or a complete regeneration. He pushed the chief dilemmas of humanity to their farthest 'psychological' limits, simply because he lived them more intensely and more tragically than any other modern spirit. And out of those depths he brought—as we have seen—the religious problem into a new light, thus opposing the entire direction of that superficial 'scientific' mentality which is equally dangerous to true Religion and to true Science.

This is the reason why Dostoevsky, apart from being one of the greatest writers of world-literature, must be numbered among those few individuals who mark the boundary between the present culture and that of to-morrow; through his spiritual martyrdom he is profoundly contemporary, but through his spiritual vision and striving he belongs to the future.



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